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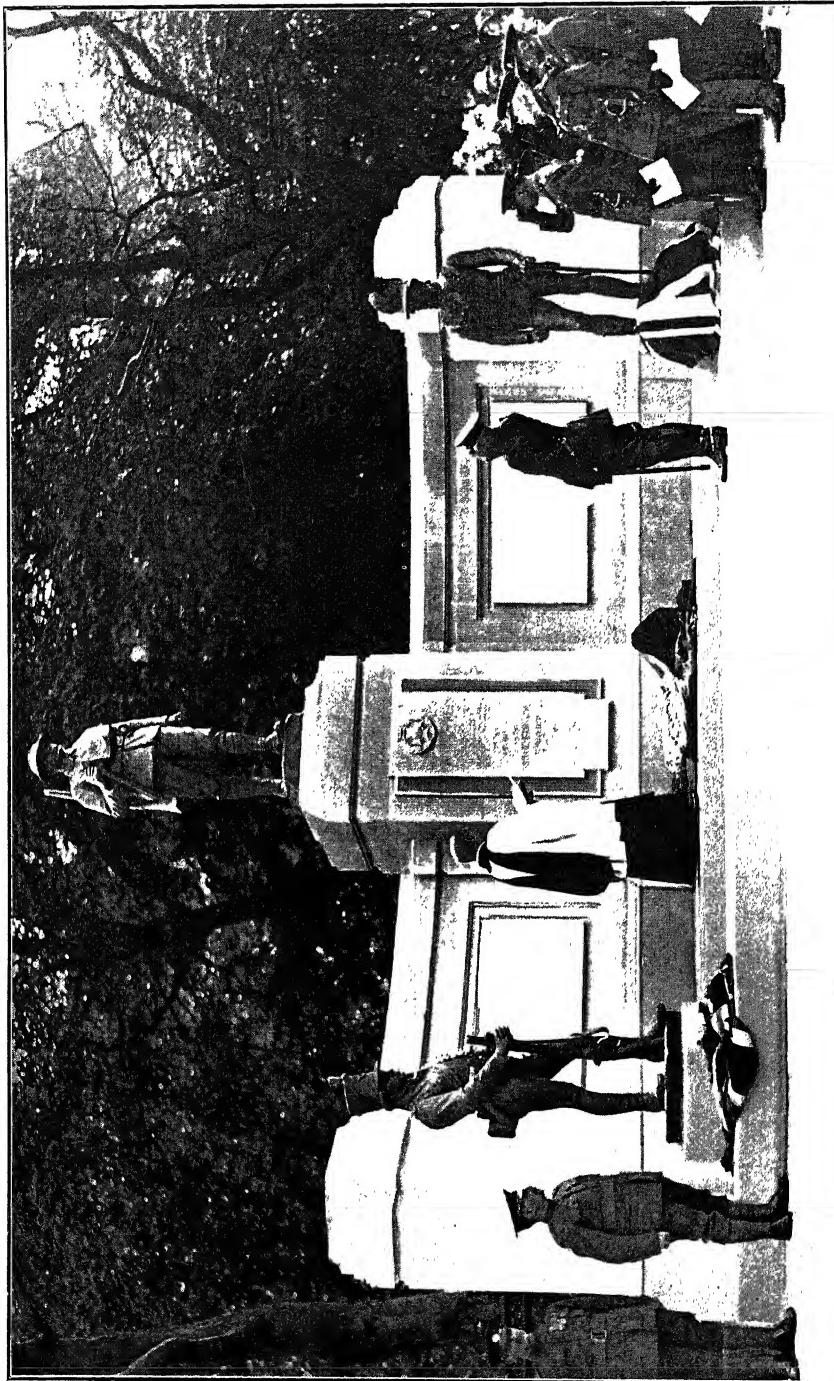
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THE
RIFLE
BRIGADE

1914-1918, 1919

In Memory of Eleven Thousand Five Hundred and Seventy-Five, All Ranks—1914-1918.



THE RIFLE BRIGADE WAR MEMORIAL, LONDON.
Unveiled, 25th July, 1925.

THE
HISTORY
OF
THE RIFLE BRIGADE
IN
THE WAR OF 1914-1918



BY
WILLIAM W. SEYMOUR
(*Brigadier-General, late The Rifle Brigade*)

VOL. II
JANUARY 1917—JUNE 1919

1936
LONDON
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The author acknowledges with deep gratitude the help afforded him in the compilation of this Volume by the loan of diaries and other private papers: that he has not made fuller use of them is due to exigencies of space.

His thanks are due also to Major-General H. M. Wilson, D.S.O., Brigadier-General F. Burnell-Nugent, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., and Major R. D. Baird, M.C., for reading and correcting the typescript and proofs; to Major J. T. W. Reeve, D.S.O., for the selection and compilation of the maps; and to Mr. K. R. Wilson for his skilled and patient assistance in preparing the book for the Press.

To Brigadier-General Sir J. E. Edmonds, C.B., C.M.G., Head of the Historical Section (Military Branch), Committee of Imperial Defence, he expresses his great indebtedness for invaluable assistance and encouragement, and to the Staff at Audit House his warmest thanks for all its help.

W. W. S.

LONDON,

September 1st, 1936.

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THE RIFLE BRIGADE IN THE WAR OF 1914-1918

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1917. THE GERMAN WITHDRAWAL TO THE HINDENBURG LINE.

IT will be remembered that the close of the year 1916 found the eleven Battalions of the Regiment in France and Flanders disposed as follows.

In the south, in the Somme Area, were the First (Lieut.-Colonel R. T. Fellowes, M.C.), Second (Lieut.-Colonel Hon. R. Brand, D.S.O.), Tenth (Lieut.-Colonel E. Lascelles), Eleventh (Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Cotton) and Twelfth (Lieut.-Colonel H. L. Riley, D.S.O.) : in the Arras area were the Seventh (Lieut.-Colonel V. A. Magawly Cerati de Calry, 6th Inniskilling Dragoons), Eighth (Lieut.-Colonel R. C. MacLachlan, D.S.O.) and Ninth (Lieut.-Colonel F. A. U. Pickering, Royal Scots Greys), with the Third * (Lieut.-Colonel R. Pigot, D.S.O., M.C.) and Thirteenth (Lieut.-Colonel F. S. N. Savage-Armstrong, D.S.O., South Staffordshire Regt.) further to the north at Loos and Neuve Chapelle respectively. The Sixteenth (Lieut.-Colonel E. N. Snepp, Norfolk Regt.) was north-east of Ypres and destined, as it turned out, to remain in and about the Salient for the next twelve months.

The Fourth Battalion (Lieut.-Colonel Hon. N. C. Gathorne-Hardy) was still with the Salonika Army holding the extreme right of the line at the mouth of the Struma River where, at this time, it was faced by the Turks.

The weather at the end of 1916 has already been described, as also the misery of existence not only in the trenches but in the so-called camps behind the line. In his book "Twelve Days" † Captain Rogerson gives a graphic description of life as it was for him and for his Battalion and

* Now Sir R. Pigot, Bart.

† "Twelve Days," Captain S. Rogerson.

as it must have been for the Battalions of the Rifle Brigade during that bitter winter. After the New Year there was a prolonged and severe frost with icy winds, but even that was preferable to the thaw ; then trench walls collapsed altogether and were un-repairable as no revetting material would hold the masses of mud which slipped down to be churned into a glutinous mixture through which it was almost impossible for a man to force his way.

Communications in rear also suffered in much the same way ; as soon as a thaw came the bottoms fell out of even those roads which had not been shelled and they became wellnigh impassable. When this happened transport, in desperation, took to the fields alongside, with the result that for fifty yards or more on each side of the road nothing could move—man, horse or vehicle. Double-horsing over the worst places became the rule, with consequent endless delays ; heavy vehicles on occasion required the assistance of twelve horses, or mules, to extricate them at all. Apart from the exhaustion of transport men and animals, and of the troops assisting them, the discomfort caused was great, waiting for hours in cheerless camp or billets without food or blankets. Such were the conditions which were to endure, with but occasional respite, until mid-April.

THE ALLIED PLANS FOR 1917.

It may be convenient to quote here what were the Allied plans for 1917, as related in Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch dated December 25th, 1917.

" 1. The general plan of campaign to be pursued by the Allied Armies during 1917 was unanimously agreed on by a conference of Military representatives of all the Allied Powers held at French General Headquarters in November 1916.

" This plan comprised a series of offensives on all fronts, so timed as to assist each other by depriving the enemy of the power of weakening any one of his fronts in order to reinforce another.

" A general understanding had also been arrived at between the then French Commander-in-Chief (General Joffre) and myself as to the rôles of our respective Armies in this general plan. . . .

" 2. Briefly stated, my plan of action for the Armies under my command in the proposed general offensive was as follows :—

" In the spring, as soon as all the Allied Armies were ready to commence operations, my first efforts were to be directed against the enemy's troops occupying the salient between the Scarpe and the Ancre, into which they had been pressed as a result of the Somme battle.

" It was my intention to attack both shoulders of this salient simultaneously, the Fifth Army operating on the Ancre front while the Third Army attacked from the north-west about Arras. These converging attacks, if successful, would pinch off the whole salient, and would be likely to make the withdrawal of the enemy's troops from it a very costly manœuvre for him if it were not commenced in good time.

" The front of attack on the Arras side was to include the Vimy Ridge, possession of which I considered necessary to secure the left flank of the operations on the south bank of the Scarpe. The capture of this ridge, which was to be carried out by the First Army, also offered other important advantages. It would deprive the enemy of valuable observation and give us a wide view over the plains stretching from the eastern foot of the ridge to Douai and beyond. Moreover, although it was evident that the enemy might, by a timely withdrawal, avoid a battle in the awkward salient still held by him between the Scarpe and the Ancre, no such withdrawal from his important Vimy Ridge positions was likely. He would be almost certain to fight for this ridge, and, as my object was to deal him a blow which would force him to use up reserves, it was important that he should not evade my attack.

" 3. With the forces at my disposal, even with what the French proposed to undertake in co-operation, I did not consider that any great strategical results were likely to be gained by following up a success on the front about Arras and to the south of it, beyond the capture of the objectives aimed at as described above. It was therefore my intention to transfer my main offensive to another part of my front after these objectives had been secured.

" The front selected for these further operations was in Flanders. They were to be commenced as soon as possible after the Arras offensive, and continued throughout the summer, as far as the forces at my disposal would permit.

" 4. The positions held by us in the Ypres salient since May 1915 were far from satisfactory. They were completely overlooked by the enemy.

" Their defence involved a considerable strain on the troops occupying them, and they were certain to be costly to maintain against a serious attack, in which the enemy would enjoy all the advantages in observation and in the placing of his artillery. Our positions would be much improved by the capture of the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge and of the high ground which extends thence north-eastwards for some seven miles and thence trends north through Broodseinde and Passchendaele. . . . Various preliminary steps had already been taken, including the necessary development

of railways in the area, which had been proceeding quietly from early in 1916. I therefore hoped, after completing my spring offensive further south, to be able to develop this Flanders attack without great delay, and to strike hard in the north before the enemy realized that the attack in the south would not be pressed further.

"5. Subsequently, unexpected developments in the early weeks of the year necessitated certain modifications in my plans above described. New proposals for action were made by our French Allies which entailed a considerable extension of my defensive front, a modification of the rôle previously allotted to the British Armies, and an acceleration of the date of my opening attack.

"As a result of these proposals, I received instructions from His Majesty's Government to readjust my previous plans to meet the wishes of our Allies. Accordingly it was arranged that I should commence the offensive early in April on as great a scale as the extension of my front would permit, with due regard to defensive requirements on the rest of my line.

"The British attack, under the revised scheme, was, in the first instance, to be preparatory to a more decisive operation to be undertaken a little later by the French Armies, in the subsequent stages of which the British Forces were to co-operate to the fullest extent possible.

"It was further agreed that if this combined offensive did not produce the full results hoped for within a reasonable time, the main efforts of the British armies should then be transferred to Flanders as I had originally intended. In this case our Allies were to assist me by taking over as much as possible of the front held by my troops, and by carrying out, in combination with my Flanders attacks, such offensives on the French front as they might be able to undertake.

"6. My original plan for the preliminary operations on the Arras front fortunately fitted in well with what was required of me under the revised scheme, and the necessary preparations were already in progress. In order to give full effect, however, to the new rôle allotted to me in this scheme, preparations for the attack in Flanders had to be restricted for the time being to what could be done by such troops and other labour as could not in any case be made available on the Arras front. Moreover, the carrying out of any offensive this year on the Flanders front became contingent on the degree of success attained by the new plan."

So much for the Allied plans. How they turned out, and how the result affected the British Armies in France and Flanders, will be seen as the story of the Battalions of the Rifle Brigade gradually unfolds.

THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1917.

The First and Second Battalions. At the beginning of January 1917, the First and Second Battalions found themselves in adjoining camps and "had a great entente together." Three football matches were played. The Second Battalion Officers and Serjeants won their games against those of the First Battalion while the latter was successful in the Battalion match. The condition of the ground is not mentioned but can be imagined. The first half of January was spent by the First Battalion in Camp 13, near Chipilly, where training was carried out. During this period five Military Medals for Gallantry in Action were awarded. On January 16th the Battalion relieved the French I^{er} Bataillon 66^{me} Reg. in the Bouchavesnes Sector. During the next five weeks it did three tours in the sector, interspersed with periods of training. No two tours were spent in the same trenches and in the last tour, when under the 10th Brigade, two heavy bombardments were experienced causing the loss of forty men in forty-eight hours. In this sector 2nd-Lieutenants T. V. Tyrwhitt-Drake and Southgate were killed and B. W. Dennis wounded and taken prisoner whilst out wiring.

On February 21st the 4th Division was relieved by the 8th Division in which was the Second Battalion. The latter Battalion spent the first few days of the year in support at Maurepas and then, after a week in camp near Bray, was moved to Warlus in the Airaines area some fifteen miles west-north-west of Amiens. Here it remained for a fortnight carrying out training and organizing a "Battle Patrol Platoon" which appears to have been an organization peculiar to the 8th Division.* Leaving Warlus on the 23rd it moved by stages to the front line where it took over trenches in the Rancourt sector on the 27th. The usual monotonous round followed, front-line, support, reserve and all the time work—until February 11th when the Battalion was moved by bus to Camp 13. After a further ten days' training it found itself once more in the line, this time in the Quarry Farm sector, Bouchavesnes, the 8th Division relieving the 4th. The remainder of the month was spent there in very bad weather conditions which resulted in a number of cases of "trench feet."

On the 28th it is joyfully recorded that Captain and Quartermaster J. H. Alldridge rejoined for duty; what had taken him away from the Battalion is not known, but at any rate his return must have been a most

* Although the Battle Patrol Platoon is frequently mentioned the Compiler has failed to discover either its composition or its duties. Exhaustive research and prolonged correspondence have been equally fruitless: even the G.O.C. 8th Division, his G.S.O. 1 and three C.O.s of the Second Battalion can throw no light upon the question. Possibly the Platoon was a band of desperadoes specially trained for raids and fighting patrols.

happy occasion. With Alldridge about the Battalion could be sure of getting at least its share of what was due. Also the never-failing joke could be begun again ; the last-joined 2nd-lieutenant was always sent with the same request :—“Morning, Quarters, I want a Tommy’s tunic and a pair of slacks, please.” The invariable answer was, “I don’t know who you mean by ‘Quarters’ : my name’s Alldridge, but if you want a Rifleman’s jacket S.D. and a pair of trousers I daresay I have got some in my Stores.”

The On January 2nd the Third Battalion was relieved by
Third Battalion. the 8th Bn. The Buffs and went into brigade reserve. On the 5th the enemy raided The Buffs, of whom forty-two were captured as well as seven Australian Tunnellers and two Riflemen attached. Prompt and heavy retribution was exacted for this impertinence. On the 11th the 2nd Bn. Leinster Regt., on the right of the Battalion, brought off a raid capturing eight and killing about forty of the enemy, while on the 14th the 1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers on its left did the same with a bag of three prisoners and about forty enemy killed. On the 16th the Battalion went into divisional reserve in Mazingarbe for a week. Here an Inter-Company Falling Plate Competition was won by “D” Company and the officers played the serjeants at football—result not recorded. On the 23rd the Battalion relieved the 8th Bn. The Buffs in the front line and on the 26th the latter, with the 12th Bn. Royal Fusiliers, carried out a combined raid resulting in eighteen prisoners and sixty enemy dead, incurring but slight casualties themselves. So the 17th Brigade, even if it had lost the first round, piled up a good many points by the end of the month.

On the 28th it is on record that, owing to the supply train being late, no rations were issued for the first time since the Battalion took the field. On February 5th, after a short spell in brigade reserve, the Battalion once more relieved The Buffs in the front line and remained there until the 13th when it was relieved by the 4th Bn. Middlesex Regt. (37th Division) and moved into billets. The tour had been marked by considerable enemy artillery and trench-mortar activity ; casualties were few in number but unfortunately 2nd-Lieutenant G. Bott was killed. “A very promising young officer : his death regretted by all ranks.” On the 14th the Battalion marched eleven miles to Annezin (near Bethune) where it remained training until the end of the month. It gave a good account of itself in games and competitions, beating the 73rd Field Ambulance 3—0 in the Final of the Brigade football competition and the 1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers in a Tile Competition. In addition it won the Divisional Cross-Country Race, having the first three men in. An Inter-Company Tile Competition was

won by "C" and "D" Companies, equal, and a concert organized by Lieutenant R. H. Walker was a great success.

The Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Battalions. For the Seventh Battalion, January was an uneventful month spent in the usual round of front-line trenches south-east of Arras, or in brigade or divisional reserve at Beaumetz and Simencourt. Enemy 90 pr. trench mortar bombs caused some annoyance and considerable damage to trenches, but apparently no casualties. The strength of the Battalion was thirty-three officers and one thousand and three other ranks.

The whole of February was spent at Sombrin, carrying out such reorganization and training as was possible when finding large working-parties. For the whole month eight officers and three hundred and forty-five other ranks at Saulty and, for part of it, two officers and one hundred and fifteen other ranks at Bavincourt were employed under the Anglesey Company R.E. on the construction of a new railway. In February R.-S.-M. C. Morgan was awarded the French Croix de Guerre.

The Eighth Battalion in the same brigade (41st) spent these two months in very much the same way. On January 2nd the War Diary records that a conversation between two German officers was picked up :—"Something on to-night, are you coming up?" Due precautions were taken but, as nothing unusual occurred during the night, it was presumed that the engagement was social rather than military. On January 4th, when the Battalion was in Beaumetz, nine shells from what was believed to be an 11-inch naval gun fell in the village—all within two hundred yards of Battalion H.Q.; casualties, one man slightly scratched—one case shell-shock. All the same, such luck could not be expected to hold always, so a reconnaissance was made to find other quarters for the resting battalion.

On the 18th a draft of one officer (2nd-Lieutenant O. F. Savege) and of seventy-three other ranks joined; most of the men had seen active service with various Battalions of the Regiment and now, for the first time for many months, the Battalion had its full complement of officers and was almost up to strength in other ranks. On the 26th there was heavy hostile trench-mortaring; 2nd-Lieutenant M. A. Young, Serjeant Ritson and two men of "C" Company were buried, Serjeant Ritson being killed, but the other three were dug out uninjured. Thirteen men also of "A" Company were imprisoned in a dug-out, but were rescued largely owing to fine work on the part of B 411 Corporal Dunn, J., who subsequently received the Military Medal for gallantry on this occasion.

During the whole month heavy working-parties were found whenever the Battalion was "at rest."

But the most serious event during the month was the loss by the Eighth Battalion of its commander—Ronnie MacLachlan—who was promoted to the command of the 112th Infantry Brigade (37th Division) with the rank of brigadier-general.*

The Battalion was paraded to hear its beloved Commanding Officer's message of farewell. Written in pencil on a sheet torn out of his field message-book it runs as follows:—

"Please tell all ranks how sorry I was to have no opportunity of wishing them Good-Bye.

"I am intensely proud of having commanded for so long and know that the splendid spirit and esprit de corps of the old 8th Battalion is as strong as ever in spite of constant fighting and incessant losses.

"I believe the love of our Regiment and of our Battalion is the keynote of all success and nothing can ever take its place. I wish everyone the best of luck."

From the parade was sent the Battalion's answer:—

"To Brig.-Gen. R. C. MacLachlan, D.S.O.,

"From All Ranks of the 8th Bn. The Rifle Brigade:—

"The Battalion wish to express what a lasting debt they owe to you for the skill, energy, and devotion with which you have trained and nursed them in their early days, and led them and inspired them in active service.

"We feel that any success that has fallen to the Battalion has been founded on your example and leadership. Those who have served under you will never forget what you have done for them, and will strive to pass on the high tradition of the Regiment which you have established in the 8th Battalion.

"All ranks unite in wishing you happiness and the highest success in your new command and in any higher post to which you may be called."

Thus closed Ronald Campbell MacLachlan's official career with the Regiment. But his spirit remained and always will, even as does his memory, with all who were privileged to know him whether in India, in South Africa, at Oxford or on service with his Eighth Battalion.

On February 1st the Battalion (less "A" and "D" Companies and most of "C"), now under the command of Captain G. V. Carey, proceeded to Grand Rullecourt while the detachments, eight officers and four hundred and fifty other ranks, left Simencourt for Berneville and Dainville.

By February 11th the disposition of the Battalion was as follows:—

* He was killed the following August whilst commanding this Brigade.

- H.Q., "A" Company and Details—Grand Rullecourt.
"C" Company—Lucheux, Mondicourt, Gobremetz.
"B" Company—Gobremetz, Couturelle.
"D" Company—Berneville.

This disposition underwent various changes, all dictated by the provision of working parties, which prevented any attempt at training or re-organization.

On the 18th the acting rank of lieutenant-colonel was authorized for Captain G. V. Carey but on the 19th Major D. E. Prideaux-Bruné arrived and assumed temporary command of the Battalion.

At the end of the month the Battalion was preparing to take over trenches from the 42nd Brigade.

In this Brigade was the Ninth Battalion, which spent a humdrum month in January. The usual round of trenches—in G Sector, north of the 41st Brigade—with spells in reserve at Dainville and Agny. This continued until February 6th, when the Battalion remained in Dainville until the 16th, on which date it started en route for the line in H Sector (still further north), which it reached on the 21st. During this spell—which lasted until the 27th—special patrols were sent out on the 24th to ascertain whether the enemy had evacuated his front-line system, news having been received that the Fifth Army (on the right) had lost touch with him; patrols however reported the line as still held. This is the first intimation—so far as the Regiment goes—of General Ludendorff's Alberich plan for shortening the German line.

On the 25th the front line was bombarded for half an hour with every form of missile upon which the enemy could lay his hands. Very little damage to the trenches—casualties nil.

On the 27th the Battalion was relieved and moved to Arras.

The Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions. During the first week in January the 20th Division relieved the Guards Division and the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions moving up from the Maricourt, Corbie area gradually took their places in the line.

The method of holding the line employed by the Guards Division was adopted by the 20th Division and, as it was a departure from the usual system, a short description may not be out of place. The front was divided into two sectors each held by one brigade group of six battalions. Each brigade group had four battalions in the line and in support and local reserve, with two battalions behind in divisional reserve, the four battalions thus found being under the tactical command of the third brigadier. The six battalions in each group rotated within their own group, thus holding

the same trenches for each tour in the line while, every eight days, a brigade staff in the line was relieved by the brigade behind. The result of this system was that battalions were constantly changing brigadiers. In January the Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions were in one group and the Tenth Battalion in the other: in February there was another change whereby all six Rifle battalions were in one group and the Light Infantry battalions in the other.

The trenches occupied were round and to the south of Sailly Saillisel and consisted chiefly of a series of island posts with a few deep dug-outs here and there. The whole of January was spent in the sector, battalions doing a round of front line with spells in support and reserve in Combles and Maltzhorn Camp.

This latter consisted of a few huts for officers' quarters and drying-rooms and French tents for the men. About January 26th all three Battalions went out for rest and training at La Houssoye, Bonnay and Méaulte respectively. The Eleventh Battalion Diary records that a party of thirty men was detached to press and bale straw—a strange job for Riflemen in wartime.

During the second week in February all three Battalions were back in the line, this time in the Les Bœufs sector, the trenches facing north in the direction of Le Transloy. The most noticeable feature of the new sector was the inclusion of an unpleasant trench—known as "B Post"—in the right battalion sub-sector and about one thousand yards south of Le Transloy.

On February 9th the Eleventh Battalion Diary says of this post:—"The position of one company is extremely precarious, being exposed to hostile attack from three sides, cut off from support by old German wire in rear and difficult to approach owing to the lie of the ground." Why this death-trap was permitted to continue is a question that might with pertinence be addressed to the Higher Command who maintained the policy that not one inch of ground—however useless or dangerous—must ever be conceded.

The Eleventh Battalion had done its best to remedy the situation by attempting to dig a communication trench back from B Post, but failed to do so owing to the iron hardness of the ground and enemy machine-gun fire.

The Tenth Battalion relieved the Eleventh in B Post in the early hours of February 19th, the relief having been delayed for thirty-six hours by machine-gun fire. At 9.30 a.m. that morning heavy shelling and trench-mortar fire began and continued throughout the day until at 5.30 p.m. the post was rushed on three sides, two flammen-werfer being employed. Casualties were caused to the enemy by Lewis-gun fire, but the guns jammed and the garrison of the post, being completely surrounded and out-numbered,

was lost. 2nd-Lieutenant R. T. Urry was killed ; 2nd-Lieutenant A. W. B. Finch was missing and over thirty other ranks shared one fate or the other. The one crumb of comfort in this unhappy episode is that the divisional commander refused to order a counter-attack to retake the post.

There is not much to record for the remainder of February. From the 16th for some days Guillemont was used as a billet in place of Carnoy owing to a large ammunition dump having been blown up by an aerial bomb. The Commanding Officer of the Tenth Battalion became a casualty in a most unfortunate manner, being accidentally wounded in the leg whilst on a tour of inspection of French Army Schools of Instruction. The Eleventh Battalion finished the month with casualties amounting to five officers wounded and 120 other ranks killed, wounded and missing.

In the Twelfth Battalion a good patrol was carried out by 2nd-Lieutenant W. H. Heap ; on his way back this officer went to the assistance of an acting-corporal who had been wounded by a shell and was most unfortunately killed by another shell.

On the 26th news was received that the enemy, further to the north, had retired ; patrols however reported that there was no sign of retirement on the 20th Division front.

The Thirteenth Battalion—in the XIth Corps, First Battalion. The Thirteenth Battalion—in the XIth Corps, First Army—moved from its trenches in the Neuve Chapelle Sector on January 2nd and went into rest billets in Paradis—La Couture—Vieille Chapelle. Here it remained training until the 14th, when it moved to Croix Barbée, whence on the 21st it returned to the Neuve Chapelle trenches. On the 27th it went into brigade reserve at La Fosse. On the first night of the last tour an unlucky rifle-grenade blew up a dump of Stokes-mortar ammunition, killing seven and wounding one man.

Whilst out at training the Battalion found two guards-of-honour on the occasion of presentations of medal ribbons by the Corps and Army Commanders (Sir R. Haking and Sir H. Horne). In each case the guard received congratulations on its turn-out. Two M.C.s, one D.C.M. and twelve M.M.s were awarded in the Battalion for the operations on the Somme and the Ancre.

From February 2nd to the 9th the Battalion carried out training at Robermetz, a small village between Estaires and Merville, and then, after staying at Bethune and Philosophe, took over the front-line trenches in the "Hulluch Left" sector. "Rather an extraordinary part of the line," comments the War Diary ; "trenches at this point are on fairly high commanding ground and the great portion of the centre front consists of craters." During this tour 2nd-Lieutenant P. M. Meeson and No. S 6522

Rfn. Gregg, W.,* carried out a bold and successful enterprise going out in broad daylight to secure identifications from a dead German lying in a crater. For this Rfn. Gregg was awarded the Military Medal. After a spell in support from the 19th to the 24th the Battalion returned to the same trenches

The Sixteenth Battalion. The Sixteenth Battalion from January 1st to the 13th alternated in front-line trenches and support in the left centre sub-section, north of Ypres. It then proceeded to "O" Camp in the woods in the triangle between Elverdinghe, Vlamertinghe and Poperinghe, where it became divisional reserve to the 55th Division, and where on January 16th it celebrated "Christmas Day." Here training was carried out until the 24th, when it moved to the Prison, Ypres, and next day to the front line as right battalion in the Wieltje sector. During this tour 2nd-Lieutenant C. C. Beale unfortunately was wounded and died later at the field ambulance. On the 30th the Battalion returned to the Prison for three days, where it finished the month.

At the end of January the G.O.C. 39th Division decided to carry out two raids, each on a considerable scale; one to be executed by the 1st/1st Bn. Hertfordshire Regt. and the other by the Sixteenth Battalion. The front to be raided by the latter appears to have been selected by the G.O.C. and included about five hundred yards of trench line mostly to the south of the

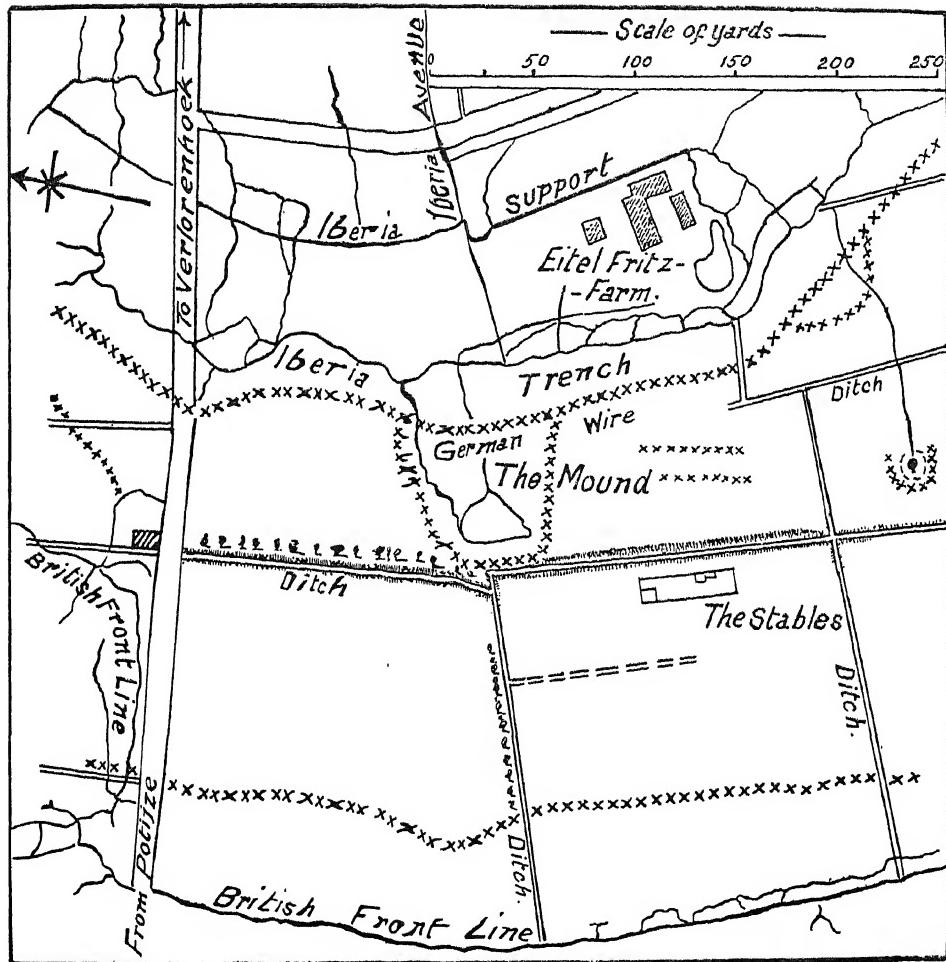
The Raid on The Mound. Verlorenhoek-Potize road and the German advanced post known as "The Mound." The latter was completely enclosed by a rhomboidal belt of low but thick wire, the base and two sides of the enclosure being each about seventy yards long and the front face about thirty-five long and one hundred and fifty yards from our front line. A sap ran back from The Mound to the German front-line trench (Iberia Trench), which was some thirty yards in rear of The Mound enclosure and continued rearwards thence as a communication trench (Iberia Avenue) to the German support line (Iberia Support), a further fifty yards to the rear again.

The strength of the raiding party was originally ordered to be "three companies, with Lewis-guns, approximately three hundred and thirty officers and men." As will be seen, this number was subsequently modified, but at the time it had considerable bearing on the movements of the Battalion.

It was decided that the raiding-party should be taken out of the line for training, so, in order to effect this, Battalion H.Q. with "A" and "C"

* Subsequently V.C., D.C.M., M.M.

YPRÉS.



THE SIXTEENTH BATTALION—RAID ON THE MOUND.

15th February, 1917.

Companies relieved Bn. H.Q. and "A" and "C" Companies of the 11th Bn. Royal Sussex Regt. in the front line (left battalion—right brigade—Railway Wood sector), each battalion adopting "B" and "D" Companies of the other. How the remaining company of the raiding-party was to be trained is not indicated in any orders from above.

After two days of this, however, Colonel Snepp, and his rather scratch pack, were relieved in the line by the 16th Bn. Sherwood Foresters and became battalion in support with H.Q. in the Convent, Ypres : he himself went to "A" Camp—just west of Vlamertinghe—to train "B" and "D" Companies for their part in the raid, Major King being recalled from the VIIIth Corps School to command the battalion which might be called the "11th/16th Sussex Riflemen." This latter went into the front line (left battalion—Railway Wood sector) on February 7th for another couple of nights, when it returned to billets in Ypres. Whilst in support here, operation orders for the raid were received, but on the 11th Higher Authority decided to reduce the numbers of the raiding party to four officers and one hundred and twenty other ranks. In consequence, on the 13th, one hundred and twenty other ranks returned to the Battalion, releasing "D" Company, 11th Bn. Royal Sussex, which returned to its unit, whilst the Battalion with "B" Company, 11th Royal Sussex, went into the front line. On this day Captain Kenward—to whom had been allocated important duties preliminary to the raid—was unfortunately wounded in Ypres. February 15th was Z Day.

The object of the raid was to inflict losses on the enemy, secure prisoners and identifications, and to damage his trenches as much as possible.

For several nights before Z Day preliminary work was done both by the Battalion and by the 16th Bn. Sherwood Foresters. This work included cutting seven gaps in our own wire (these were plugged at the enemy end with concertina wire to be removed after dark on Z Day), building ramps to facilitate egress from our own trenches and bridging ditches with duck-boards. There were also prolonged wire-cutting by the artillery and "drill" barrages.

Colonel Snepp's orders were very complete and included every possible detail. The raiding-party was divided into three groups each of two waves. The centre group was to take The Mound and the sap leading to Iberia Trench ; the right group was to enter Iberia Trench through a gap in the wire and to send on a small party to Eitel Fritz Farm—thirty yards, or so, in rear of Iberia Trench. The two flank groups were each to extend—outwards to the limit of the objective and inwards to join hands with the centre group. In addition special parties were detailed to protect the flanks. Seven other ranks of No. 225 Field Company R.E. were attached carrying

explosives with which to destroy enemy dug-outs and machine-gun emplacements. Lieutenant G. M. Robinson was the commander and the other officers were 2nd-Lieutenants J. C. Maclehone, A. Wilson and H. E. Gordon ; the strength of the party was one hundred and seventy all ranks inclusive of the seven Royal Engineers.

After dark on the 14th final preparations were to be made, concertinas removed from the gaps in our wire and tapes laid out for assembly in No Man's Land. At 10.40 p.m. hot tea and rum were to be issued at Dragoon Farm and by midnight assembly was to be complete in the front-line trenches. Zero hour was 12.25 a.m.

Assembly on the tapes was to begin at zero - 7, and at zero - 4 the barrage was to fall on the line of The Mound. At zero + 25 the withdrawal was to begin.

So much for the preliminaries. The assembly in No Man's Land was accomplished without any trouble : the only incident was that some thirty of our shells fell on the objective six minutes before the barrage was due to fall. Although this does not appear to have influenced the movements of the raiders it may possibly have acted as a warning to the enemy. Punctually to time the leading waves of the three groups advanced, but trouble began immediately. Moving forward through heavy rifle-fire the parties reached the enemy wire, but the right party could find no gap opposite to it ; moving to the left a small gap about a yard wide was found through which a serjeant led a small party which established a bombing-block at the place intended. At this time 2nd-Lieutenant Wilson was wounded. The remainder of the party failed to get in, but the serjeant's party engaged in a bombing fight with a party of the enemy but, after some fourteen minutes, it had exhausted its bombs and was forced to withdraw.

The centre group got into The Mound without difficulty, but the parties appear to have become split up, some men following the officer, Lieutenant G. M. Robinson, and others getting into the German trench but too far to the right. Failing to gain touch with the flanks, the group withdrew on receiving the signal to withdraw ; Lieutenant Robinson was wounded on the way back but was assisted in by a Rifleman.

The left group made straight for the German wire but when three-quarters of the way across 2nd-Lieutenant Maclehone was mortally wounded. Without their officer the remainder carried on, but only two small parties found a gap in the wire and these, after a bombing fight, also withdrew on the rocket-signal.

So the raid had been a failure, but it is difficult to see what more the Battalion could have done in the face of un-cut wire. In his report the brigadier of the 117th Brigade suggests that prolonged wire-cutting and

bombardment of such a narrow front of attack had given ample warning to the enemy who had patched up the gaps in his wire as they were cut by us ; this would appear to be the correct solution.

No identifications were secured and only some ten or a dozen Germans accounted for ; against that the casualties of the raiders amounted to thirty per cent. of the strength engaged. 2nd-Lieutenant Maclehone and eight other ranks were killed : Lieutenant Robinson, 2nd-Lieutenants Wilson and Gordon (the latter subsequently died of his wounds) and forty-two other ranks were wounded and seven men were missing.

On the 16th the Battalion was withdrawn into support at the Convent, Ypres, and on the 26th was moved into yet another public institution of Ypres—the Infantry Barracks.

Re-organization of Infantry. At the end of 1916 the General Staff issued a pamphlet on the subject of Training.

During the early months of 1917 each battalion of the Regiment took the earliest opportunity of training upon the new lines laid down, but whereas some battalions were enabled to do so in January it was not until April that the last battalion—the Sixteenth—was given a chance of practising the new formations.

The main points to which attention was given were the organization of an assaulting force in waves so as to give depth and the training and employment of Lewis-gun teams, bombers and rifle grenadiers.

The pamphlet issued a timely warning against an undue predilection for the bomb at the expense of the rifle and sword and continued :—" It may be taken for granted that once an attack has come down to the bombing stage, the operation has come to a standstill."

Many of the operations of 1917 bear witness to the truth of this statement but, as will be seen later, its authors appear, themselves, to have forgotten it.

THE ALBERICH PLAN.

As has been seen in Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch, quoted in this chapter, the Commander-in-Chief had foreseen the possibility of a German withdrawal to the newly constructed line known to us as the Hindenburg Line and to the enemy as the Siegfried Position. In his book " My War Memories, 1914-18," General Ludendorff explains his reasons for considering a withdrawal and his plans for putting it into effect.

The scheme was known as " Alberich " and orders to carry it out were issued on February 4th, and February 9th was to be the " First Alberich



SECOND-LIEUTENANT G. E. CATES, V.C.

Day." On March 16th the retreat was to begin provided that no attacks by the Allies necessitated an earlier withdrawal. As it turned out, in the north from about March 11th and in the south about the 13th, some minor withdrawals were made to avoid attack, but the main retreat was begun on March 16th "according to plan." It may be stated here that the Hindenburg Line left the old German trenches at Tilloy-lez-Mofflaines—just south-east of Arras—and, passing just west of St. Quentin, rejoined them north of the River Aisne some few miles east of Soissons.

It will be remembered that the beginning of March found the Second Battalion about Bouchavesnes and the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth in the Les Bœufs sector. During the first week of the month the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt., in conjunction with the 24th Brigade on the left, brought off a very successful raid, the repercussions of which affected the Second Battalion to the extent of forty-five casualties; four men were killed and five officers (2nd-Lieutenants H. G. Pidsley (twice), Brown, B. W. Batchelor, H. A. Ware and L. Hobbs) and thirty-six other ranks wounded.* On the 16th the Battalion came out of the old trenches for the last time and was billeted at Maurepas, where the War Diary records for the 18th :—"Battalion engaged cleaning up Captain G. M. A. Ellis who joined H.Q. for duty." Captain Ellis' previous experiences of war had not been fortunate; in the South African War with the First Battalion in his first action he was severely wounded in the foot and, once more with the same battalion and within a week of joining it, he was again severely wounded in the leg at the attack at Boesinghe on July 6th, 1915. His stay with the Second Battalion was to be a little longer, but not greatly so, for he was destined to be desperately wounded a month later on April 21st. A record of which any Rifleman might be justly proud particularly as, upon each occasion, it was the result of his own insistence that he was serving in the front line and under a commanding officer some years junior to himself.

Incidentally, as a result of his second and third wounds, his wound pension for his first was reduced !

On the 7th, the 20th Division had reverted to the normal brigade system of holding the line.

The German Withdrawal. In the meanwhile, by the 14th a general German retirement had begun in front of the Third Army on the left and everything pointed to a similar retirement on the front of the Fourth Army. Frequent patrols were sent out nightly

* On March 8th 2nd-Lieutenant G. E. Cates was mortally wounded by a bomb which he attempted to smother with his foot.

He received the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross.

but, although on the 15th the Guards Division on the right had gained a footing in the enemy line to the south of Saillisel, there was no change on the front of the Tenth Battalion at Les Bœufs nor on that of its immediate neighbours. The Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions were out of the line as also, as already noted, was the Second.

On the evening of the 16th information from the Royal Flying Corps pointed to the fact that a German retirement on a large scale was about to begin. No transport had been visible anywhere near the enemy lines ; trees had been cut down and laid across the main roads and although the aeroplane had been flying low it had met with no anti-aircraft fire. Intensive patrolling during the night, however, showed the enemy to be still in occupation up to 5 a.m., both on the front of the Tenth Battalion and on that of the adjoining battalions. At 6 a.m. on the 17th information was received from the 59th Brigade that the 14th Australian Brigade, about half a mile to the left, had entered the enemy front line and a patrol was at once sent out, under 2nd-Lieutenant G. W. White. By now it was broad daylight. "This officer," says the Battalion Diary, "although he must have been convinced himself that the enemy was still in occupation, walked over to the enemy line. He was rewarded by finding it empty and by being the first officer or man of the 59th Brigade to enter the enemy trenches." The place entered was a well-known enemy machine-gun post known as Ersatz Point.

Orders had previously been issued by the 59th Brigade regarding action to be taken on an enemy withdrawal, so, in accordance with these the Battalion immediately occupied a line some six to eight hundred yards forward, thus including "B Post" of unhappy memory of February 19th. The main line of resistance, however, was still the old front line. During the day the Battalion, with "A" Company as vanguard company, pushed on until its advanced posts were beyond the Bapaume road about Windmill Mound, south-east of Le Transloy. The only casualty on this day was Captain A. R. Cockle, wounded.

That same afternoon it was relieved by the Eleventh Battalion and went into brigade reserve, but early on the 20th it was moved forward to bivouacs in Le Transloy for much-needed work on the roads. From the 25th the Battalion, now in support, moved forward gradually from Sailly-Saillisel until on the 28th it reached a position in the valley behind the Canal, north of Etricourt.

When the Eleventh Battalion relieved the Tenth on the 17th it continued the advance and by the evening of the 19th its advanced posts were established just south of Barastre, when it was relieved and went back to

Carnoy. Here it remained training and finding working-parties until the 25th, when a gradual move forward took it to the Lechelle area by the 28th.

Everyone appeared to enjoy the change to open warfare. The Twelfth Battalion Diary notes of the 19th :—" It is now possible to go anywhere in the Saillisel valley without being seen by the Boche, who is reported to have retired some four miles or more. Guns and ammunition are being brought up and everybody seems pleased with life." On this day the Twelfth Battalion moved into the line with its right on Le Mesnil-en-Arrouaise with posts extending some half a mile to the north-west. Here the Battalion remained until the 24th digging new trenches, wiring, and repairing roads. Although the weather was very cold with more snow and frost, there were sufficient German dug-outs to accommodate all the men, who were also able to keep warm by the unaccustomed freedom of movement. The corps cavalry maintained posts in front by day towards Ytres—some two miles to the north-east—and was relieved by the corps cyclists at night. The only unpleasantness was caused by a German H.V. naval gun which shelled Le Mesnil, killing several cavalry horses but causing no actual casualties in the Battalion although there were several narrow shaves—notably for " B " Company's H.Q. On relief the Battalion had a march of some ten miles to camp at Guillemont, where from the 25th—" a beautiful spring morning"—it remained for three days training and bathing.

The Second Battalion was employed road-making about Moislains and Bouchavesnes from the 20th to the 27th, when it went into the line in front of Equancourt and Equancourt Wood. For the next two days the outposts were pushed forward until they reached a line east of Fins and along the Fins-Nurlu road.

On the 28th the 10th and 11th Battalions of the 60th occupied Ytres, the enemy being reported as holding the line Fins-Metz-en-Couture—south-west corner of Havrincourt Wood.

On the 29th the 12th Bn. King's Liverpool Regt. captured Neuville. On this date the enemy was still holding the high ground from east of Neuville to Dessart Wood and a combined attack was decided upon between the 8th Division on the right and the 59th Brigade on the left, the latter acting as advanced guard to the 20th Division.

* It will be recalled that the positions of the three Battalions on the 29th were, from right to left, the Second in Fins and about the Fins-Nurlu road, the Tenth in the valley behind the canal north of Etricourt and the Eleventh about Lechelle.

Attack on
Dessart Wood.
March 30th, 1917.

On March 30th the three Battalions were to attack in line, their objective being from a point on the Fins-Gouzeaucourt road south-east of Dessart Wood to about five hundred yards east of Neuville. The right and centre Battalions each had a frontage of about twelve hundred yards and the Eleventh Battalion rather more. At 4 p.m. the attack was launched and before darkness fell the three Battalions were established on their objectives—in touch with each other and with the units on their flanks.

The Second Battalion advanced with "B" Company leading covered by the Battle Patrol Platoon. On emerging from the sunken road, north of Fins, machine-gun fire was encountered from the right front but, on seeing the number of men advancing, the enemy fled and the gun was captured by the Royal Irish Rifles on the right. With "A" Company in support, the advance met with little opposition through Dessart Wood and had soon reached its objective with a loss of 2nd-Lieutenant A. E. Adams slightly wounded, three other ranks killed and ten wounded. "An altogether successful operation" telegraphed the G.O.C., 8th Division.

The Tenth and Eleventh Battalions were equally successful but each incurred rather more casualties than the Second.

The Tenth Battalion, with an advance of some fifteen hundred yards, moved on a two-company frontage: the leading companies were each in two waves in extended order with the other two in artillery formation. The Diary records that the enemy gunners evidently found difficulty in ranging on the latter formation. Casualties were 2nd-Lieutenants G. W. White (commanding "D" Company), N. V. Robinson, and thirty-two other ranks wounded—shell-fire and bullets causing an equal proportion.

In the Eleventh Battalion, "C" and "D" Companies led, "the men moving admirably in open formation." Its casualties were four other ranks killed, 2nd-Lieutenants H. Hindle, W. L. Southon, Bruce and forty-one other ranks wounded.

Thus ended a very successful and memorable day with what, in the circumstances, may be considered slight casualties.

On April 4th the same three Battalions found themselves once more attacking.

Gouzeaucourt and
Metz-en-Couture.
April 4th, 1917.

On the 3rd, the Second Battalion had taken over the outpost line and that night posts were established twelve hundred yards further forward, but it was unable to occupy the Mill buildings on the Fins-Gouzeaucourt road, on the crest of the ridge about one thousand yards short of the latter village.

On the 4th the Battalion was ordered to attack the high ground north

of the Fins-Gouzeaucourt road while the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt., on the left, attacked Gouzeaucourt Wood, the eastern edge of which was its objective.

Originally timed for 2 p.m., the attack was postponed to 2.15 owing to the snow and the difficulty of moving the guns. "C" Company carried out the attack with three platoons but, after advancing five hundred yards, was stopped by enfilade machine-gun fire from the wood in front of which the Royal Berkshire was hung up. Whilst digging itself in here news was received that the 20th Division on the left had captured Metz-en-Couture and was moving east. Orders were then issued for the Battalion to occupy its objective by pushing out posts after dark. Accordingly the Battle Patrol Platoon was moved up; half was to occupy the high ground north of the Gouzeaucourt road with "C" Company in support, and the other half to capture the strong point at the Mill buildings, while "B" Company pushed posts forward up the ridge on the right flank. The left part of the advance was successful, but the Mill party was unable to capture the strong point, losing its commander, 2nd-Lieutenant A. E. Adams, wounded, and several men, and "B" Company was equally unable to reach the crest of the ridge, though several hundred yards were gained. At 10 a.m. on the 5th a Stokes-mortar was brought up and, after thirty rounds had been fired at the Mill post, the Battle Patrol Platoon, under Serjeant Cross, drove the enemy down the hill towards Gouzeaucourt inflicting numerous casualties. Still its position was too exposed for it to remain there by daylight under enemy artillery fire, so it was withdrawn to the late enemy trench at the Mill post; "B" Company on the right attacked once more but was unable to reach the crest, its commander, 2nd-Lieutenant Southall, being wounded in the attempt. Only after dark were all objectives occupied, by which time the operations of the 4th and 5th had cost the Second Battalion ten other ranks killed and twenty-three wounded in addition to the two officers already mentioned.

Whilst these events were in progress the Tenth and Eleventh Battalions were busy further to the north. The 59th Brigade was still acting as advanced guard to the 20th Division and it was proposed to attack Metz-en-Couture on the 4th. It was hoped, however, that the enemy might have evacuated the village beforehand, so, at 3.15 a.m. on the 3rd, a patrol of the Eleventh Battalion consisting of twenty other ranks and two Lewis-guns, under 2nd-Lieutenant T. F. Pullein, supported by a similar party under 2nd-Lieutenant Metcalf, left our lines at a point nearly a mile distant from the nearest part of Metz with a view to entering, and if possible occupying, the village.

The patrol moved along a track running from west to east into the centre of the village, the outskirts of which it reached without opposition. Here, however, heavy fire was opened from trenches north and south of the track and, although returned by both patrol and support, further progress was impossible and both parties withdrew. The snow on the ground made operations difficult.

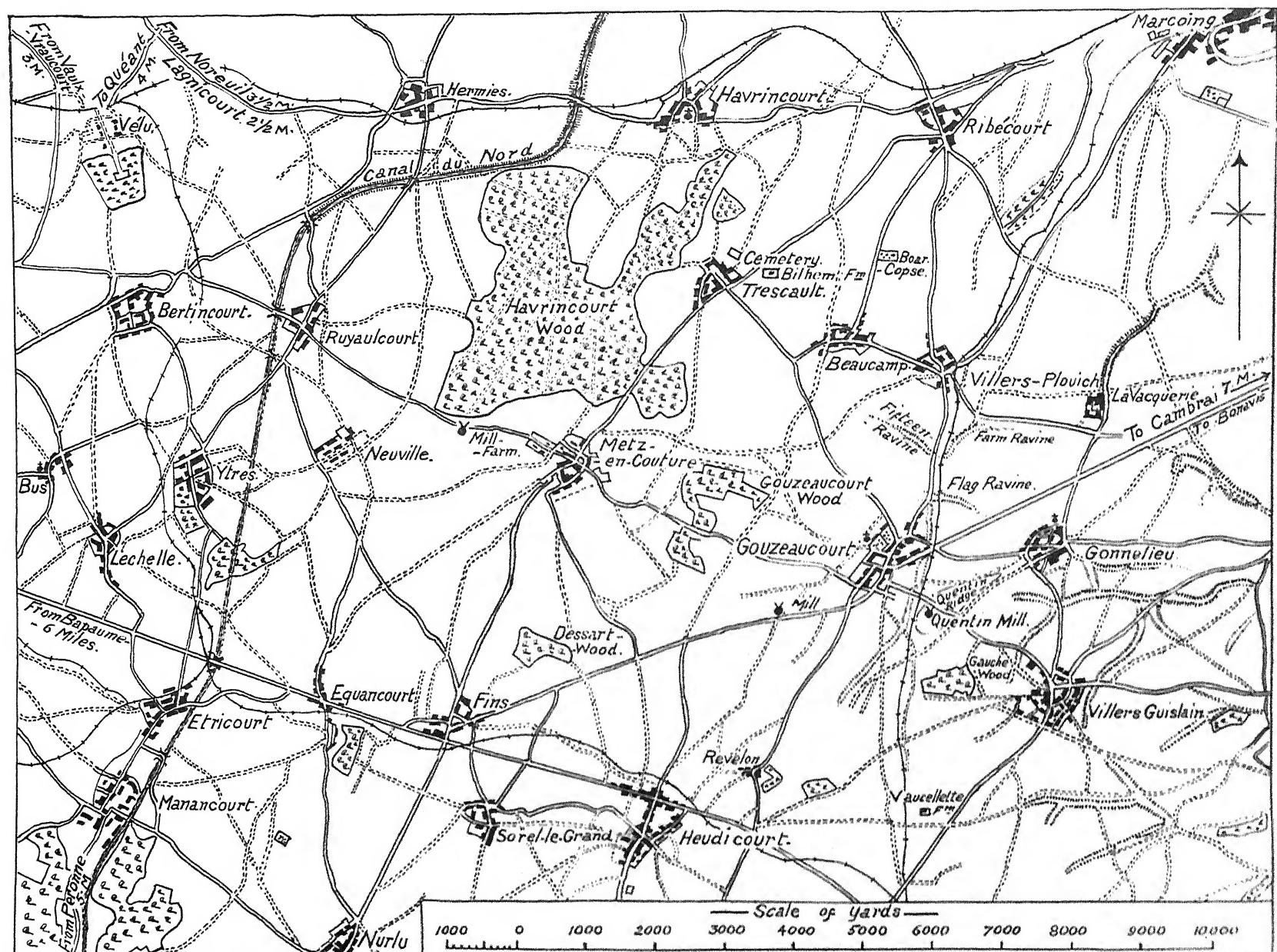
Before attacking on the 4th the Brigadier, 59th Brigade, decided to make a further reconnaissance of Metz and it was now the turn of the Tenth Battalion. At 1 a.m. on the 4th a fighting patrol of twenty-six men, and two Lewis-guns, under 2nd-Lieutenant W. Buckworth, supported by the whole of "C" Company, went forward to Metz. When it reached the enemy wire it was fired on by rifles, machine-guns and trench-mortars, and after a short fire-fight was withdrawn. All the wounded were safely brought back, several men showing great gallantry in doing so. The enemy machine-guns and trench-mortars were captured later in the day by the 60th Rifles during their successful attack on the village.

This attack was part of an operation carried out by the 59th Brigade and both the Tenth and Eleventh Battalions were engaged. The 8th Division, as already related, was attacking on the right.

The attack was to be carried out in two phases ; the first phase was the capture of Metz and for this zero hour was 2 p.m. The second phase was the capture of an enemy trench running south-east from just inside Havrincourt Wood at its extreme south-west point for some one thousand yards, and the establishment of posts along the edge of the wood and between the wood and Metz ; for this zero hour was 3.25 p.m. The assaulting battalions were the 10th and 11th Battalions 60th and the Eleventh Battalion, the latter being on the left. The Tenth Battalion was in reserve but had one company attached to the 11th Battalion, 60th, and one to the Eleventh Battalion, but by the end of the action the two remaining companies had been employed in reinforcing these battalions. Snow had been falling heavily all night and during the morning and the ground was white. At zero hour—3.25 p.m.—"B" Company (Captain H. A. Slade) advanced, followed by "D" Company (Lieutenant J. M. West) in support ; "A" Company (2nd-Lieutenant W. M. Frankish) with "C" Company (Captain Hon. A. M. Bertie) in support, having a shorter distance to advance, left their trenches a few minutes later. The right of the attack was protected by a ridge but the left company and the extreme left of the right company after going one hundred yards came under the fire of a machine-gun in the extreme west corner of Havrincourt Wood and were unable to advance. The Commanding Officer (Colonel Cotton) asked for a three minutes' intensive bombardment of this corner of the wood, but the artillery, whose

THE ADVANCE TO THE HINDENBURG LINE.

1917.



THE SECOND, TENTH AND ELEVENTH BATTALIONS.

ATTACK ON DESSART WOOD, 30th March, 1917.

METZ-EN-COUTURE AND HAVRINCOURT WOOD, 4th April, 1917.

THE SECOND BATTALION ATTACK ON GONNELIEU, 21st April, 1917.

barrage had been falling two hundred yards short, failed to silence the gun, the fire being again short. At 3.55 p.m. the barrage lifted and the right of the assault captured its portion of the trench without much difficulty; the left was still hung up and various attempts were made to silence the enemy machine-gun with Vickers and Lewis-gun fire; but it was the success of the right of the assault and the excellent handling of his company by Captain Slade which eventually forced the obstinate gun to retire. As soon as the enemy trench was captured "B" Company pushed on and occupied the edge of the wood, its rifle and Lewis-gun fire causing heavy casualties to the retreating enemy; having gained touch with the 11th Battalion 60th on the right, Captain Slade sent patrols to his left along the edge of the wood which was eventually, at 7 p.m., reported clear of the enemy. All this while the left companies had been trying to dislodge the machine-gun, suffering severely in the process, and were making a final effort before darkness fell when the action of "B" Company's patrols cleared the way in front of them. Half of "A" Company, Tenth Battalion, was sent up to Mill Farm and from thence worked its way through to the western edge of the wood; the other half-company had already been used up in strengthening the centre of the line. By nightfall all objectives had been taken and consolidation was in hand. The action was a fine example of tactical handling of a company and of mutual co-operation and support. Unfortunately casualties were heavy but, considering the snow-covered ground, it is perhaps remarkable that they were not even heavier. In the Eleventh Battalion, of the fourteen officers and three hundred and seventy-three other ranks who went into action, 2nd-Lieutenant Metcalf and thirty-six other ranks were killed, 2nd-Lieutenants H. S. S. de Jastrzebski and P. D. Stokes died of their wounds, Lieutenant J. M. West, 2nd-Lieutenants W. N. Frankish, A. F. Thomson, F. J. Moore and seventy-eight other ranks were wounded. In the Tenth Battalion casualties during and immediately preceding the action were Lieutenant J. M. Ramsay died of wounds and four other ranks killed, 2nd-Lieutenant T. G. L. Ashwell and fifteen other ranks wounded. Both Battalions were relieved on the 5th for re-organization, training and the inevitable working parties.

Here it is necessary to leave the four Battalions operating in the south and turn northwards to follow the fortunes of those which were about to take part in the first great offensive battle of the campaign of 1917.

CHAPTER II

THE SPRING CAMPAIGN.*
THE BATTLES OF ARRAS.
APRIL-MAY 1917.

SIR DOUGLAS HAIG'S instructions from H.M.'s Government and his intentions have already been quoted ; it may be convenient here to quote further from his Despatch giving his description of the German Defences.

" Prior to our offensive, the new German lines of defence on the British front ran in a general north-westerly direction from St. Quentin to the village of Tilloy-lez-Mofflaines, immediately south-east of Arras. Thence, the German original trench-system continued northwards across the valley of the Scarpe River to the dominating Vimy Ridge, which, rising to a height of some 475 feet, commands a wide view to the south-east, east and north. Thereafter the opposing lines left the high ground, and, skirting the western suburbs of Lens, stretched northwards to the Channel across a flat country of rivers, dykes, and canals, the dead level of which is broken by the line of hills stretching from Wytschaete north-eastwards to Passchendaele and Staden.

" The front attacked by the Third and First Armies on the morning of the 9th April extended from just north of the village of Croisilles, south-east of Arras, to just south of Givenchy-en-Gohelle at the northern foot of Vimy Ridge, a distance of nearly fifteen miles. It included between four and five miles of the northern end of the Hindenburg Line, which had been built to meet the experience of the Somme Battle.

" Further north, the original German defences in this sector were arranged on the same principle as those which we had already captured further south. They comprise three separate trench systems, connected by a powerful switch line running from the Scarpe at Fampoux to Liévin and formed a highly organized defensive belt some two to five miles in depth.

" In addition, from three to six miles further east a new line of resistance was just approaching completion. This system, known as the Drocourt-Quéant Line, formed a northern extension of the Hindenburg Line, with which it linked up at Quéant."

* The general Map of the Arras area will be found facing p. 70.

The main attack was to be carried out by the Third Army on the right and the First Army on the left. The Third Battalion, in the 1st Corps of the latter army, was not employed in the attack although, as will be seen, it came into action later in the month. In the Third Army were the First, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth and Thirteenth Battalions, all of whom, before the battle was over, were destined to have their full share of the heavy fighting which was to come.

The First Battalion had spent the greater part of the month of March training at Rougefay, five miles west of Frévent, and at La Thieuloye, the same distance north-east of St. Pol. On March 22nd, upon the death of H.R.H. The Duchess of Connaught, the following telegram was dispatched :

"All ranks of 1st Bn. The Rifle Brigade beg to offer their very deep sympathy to their Colonel-in-Chief in his great bereavement."

To this His Royal Highness graciously replied :—

"Much appreciate kind sympathy of all ranks of 1st Battalion The Rifle Brigade. I shall never forget I was your Commanding Officer when I was married."

Eventually on April 7th and 8th the Battalion was moved up to Maroeuil Wood, three miles north-west of Arras, and from here on the 9th moved to its appointed place in the battle. The 4th Division was now in the XVIIth, the left, Corps of the Third Army.

March was spent by the 14th Division in and about Arras. During the greater part of the month the Seventh and Eighth Battalions were split up as working parties, and little training was possible. The Eighth Battalion Diary on March 15th records that the Battalion was concentrated for the first time since February 1st. On March 17th the same Battalion dispatched a telegram of condolence to H.R.H. the Colonel-in-Chief on the death of H.R.H. The Duchess of Connaught.

The Ninth Battalion in the 42nd Brigade spent more of March in the front line than the Battalions of the 41st Brigade.

As early as March 1st the Brigade Diary reports "2-inch trench mortars cut gaps in the enemy wire throughout the day on our front, provoking no retaliation from the enemy, a most unusual occurrence ; it would appear to point to the fact that they intend to retire from their present front line shortly."

On the 11th the Battalion had an unpleasant time, Ronville being heavily shelled with every calibre from 8-inch downwards ; casualties were

remarkably few but it was decided to evacuate the village which had contained Battalion H.Q. and two companies.

On March 18th the long-expected enemy retirement began from the whole front-line system between Gommecourt and Tilloy and, so far as the 42nd Brigade and the Ninth Battalion were affected, the enemy line now ran, from north to south, from a point five hundred yards west of Tilloy Chateau—south-eastwards outside the west edge of the village to its southernmost point—thence south through the Harp and Telegraph Hill into the Hindenburg Line.

"We have now captured," says the Brigade Diary, "what was originally our first objective in the offensive and get a very good view of the second objective which now becomes our first, namely the Harp, except on the southern portion, which is covered by Telegraph Hill."

At the end of the month, the Ninth Battalion was moved back to Fosseux, about eight miles behind Arras. The 14th Division formed part of the VIIth Corps on the right of the Third Army.

The Thirteenth Battalion, having been relieved in the Hulluch sector on March 1st, moved about the First Army area by march route carrying out such general training as it could during occasional halts of one to three days. On the 9th it turned south leaving the First Army and marched to Maisnil-St. Pol, three miles south-east of St. Pol, which it reached on March 10th. Here it remained training until April 5th, the 37th Division being now in the VIth Corps, Third Army, destined to be the centre corps of that army in the impending attack. On March 4th, Lieut.-Colonel C. F. Pretor-Pinney, D.S.O., rejoined from England and re-assumed command in place of Lieut.-Colonel F. S. N. Savage-Armstrong, D.S.O., South Staffordshire Regt., who left to assume command of the 11th Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regt. The Battalion made a good start in its new army, a guard-of-honour of one officer and twenty-five other ranks attending a presentation of medal ribbons and being complimented on its turn-out by the Army Commander (General Sir E. H. H. Allenby).

It is beyond the scope of this account to consider the rôle of the First Army, whose objective was, roughly speaking, the Vimy Ridge.

That of the Third Army, which alone concerns the five Battalions of the Rifle Brigade engaged, was as follows:—

The attack of the Third Army with the VIIth, VIth and XVIIth Corps in the line and the XVIIIth Corps in reserve, "was planned to be carried out by a succession of comparatively small advances, the separate stages of which were arranged to correspond approximately with the enemy's

successive systems of defence. As each stage was reached a short pause was to take place, to enable the troops detailed for the attack on the next objective to form up for the assault.” *

The first three German systems of defence for the purpose of the attack were known respectively as the Black, Blue and Brown Lines : the final objective was the Green Line which included the fourth German system as well as such tactical features as the villages of Guémappe, Monchy-le-Preux and Fampoux, which lay in rear of that system.

The time of each successive advance was fixed beforehand, but it is unnecessary to give them here. The Cavalry Corps was under the orders of the Third Army and would be used to exploit the situation if all went according to plan.

An artillery bombardment was to extend over the four days preceding Z Day, which was originally to have been April 8th ; on the 5th, however, orders were received postponing the attack twenty-four hours until the 9th, consequently an extra day's bombardment was arranged for and carried out. Zero hour was 5.30 a.m.

Of the three divisions containing the Battalions of the Regiment two—4th and 37th—were on the day of attack in corps reserve ; the 14th Division was in the line but the Ninth Battalion was reserved for the final objective of the 42nd Brigade, whilst the Seventh and Eighth Battalions were not employed until next day.

Thus no Battalion of the Regiment took part in the assault on the German front line—a task which events will show was to be the least difficult encountered during the Battle.

THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE SCARPE.

On April 9th the 4th Division, in reserve, had the rôle of passing through the three assaulting divisions (9th, 34th and 51st) after these had captured the first three systems and of assaulting part of the fourth system between Fampoux and Gavrelle.

The First
Battalion Attack on
the Hyderabad
Redoubt.
April 9th, 1917.

The 11th Brigade was formed up with two battalions in front—1st Bn. Somerset Light Infantry and 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt.—and the 1st Bn. East Lancashire Regt. in support. “ † The rôle of the Battalion was to pass through this system and capture and consolidate Hyderabad Redoubt. ‘ A ’ and ‘ C ’ Companies were to do this, supported by ‘ B ’ Company, whose job it was to occupy the sunken road between the

* Sir Douglas Haig’s Despatch.

† From the narrative in Lieutenant J. A. Davison’s private diary.

Fourth German system (i.e. the Fampoux-Bailleul road) and the redoubt and make a line of strong points along it. 'I' Company was detailed for carrying purposes only and was under the Brigade.

"On the evening of the 8th we were in camp at Marœuil Wood. Here there was an observation balloon up and when it came down we asked the observer if he could see the results of the bombardment. He said that although he had been observing there for over two years he could not recognize the first two German lines; that the fourth line was badly knocked about and he could not pick out the Hyderabad Redoubt at all." The accuracy of his observation will be apparent as the narrative proceeds.

"We started off at about 5.30 a.m. (Zero hour) on the 9th, heavily laden with picks, shovels, bombs, etc., Schiff's orderly carrying a football tied to his rifle.

"The Battalion went into action with Head Quarters and three companies totalling thirteen officers and three hundred and forty-two other ranks distributed as follows:—

H.Q.: Colonel Fellowes, Green and Lole, with Dale our faithful M.O.

'A' Company: Cavendish, Wellard, Bridgeman, Day.

'B' Company: Jackson, Booth, Spencer.

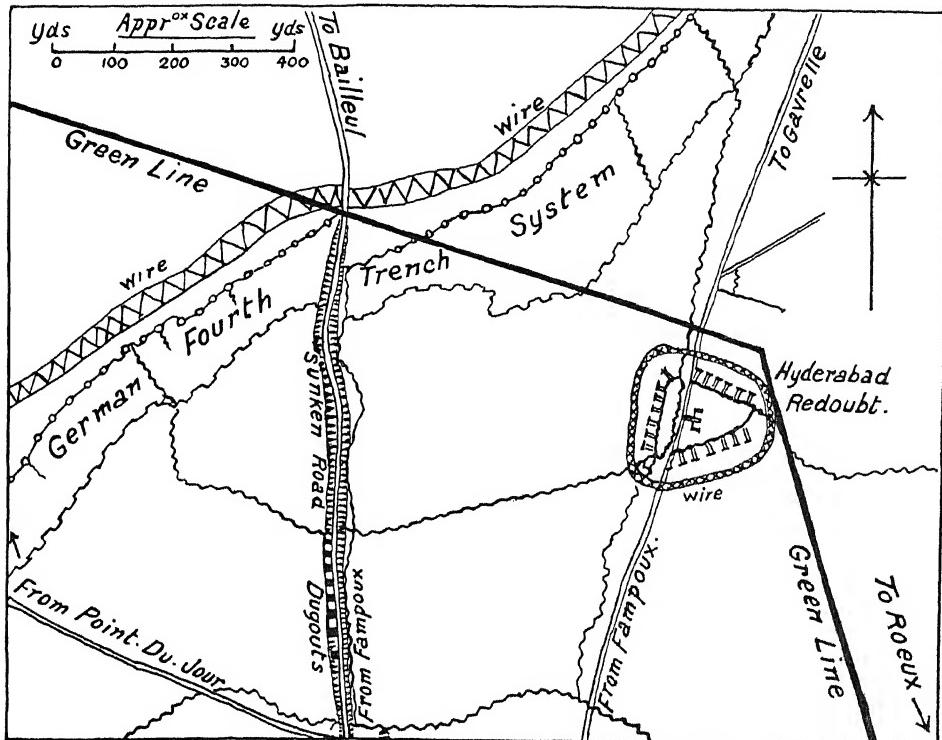
'C' Company: Davison, Waudby, Schiff.

"After a two hours' wait at our assembly area, during which we had hot 'dinners,' we left at 10.30 and in column of route, crossing the original No-man's land and halted for an hour behind the second German system under the Arras-Lens railway embankment (The Blue Line). By this time we knew that things were going well; masses of prisoners had passed us going to the rear and our artillery was moving forward to take up positions.

"Our next move was in artillery formation on a two-company front until we reached the third German system, where we had to halt for over two hours, to allow for a new bombardment. While we were sitting in the trenches here a German aeroplane came over and shot at us with his machine-gun. The 34th and 9th Divisions told us they had had practically no fighting for this third system. Prisoners still kept coming in and it was a strange sight to see bodies of these Boches wandering about over the country with no escort and apparently nobody taking any interest in them."

Towards the end of this halt, at 3.10 p.m., the Somerset Light Infantry and Hampshires assaulted and captured the enemy fourth system whilst the East Lancashires formed a defensive flank facing north from the left of the Hampshires to the Point Du Jour; reference to the map will show that the Green Line runs almost due west from north of the Hyderabad Redoubt.

THE BATTLES OF ARRAS.



THE FIRST BATTALION—CAPTURE OF HYDERABAD REDOUBT.

9th April, 1917.

"Our show," continues the narrative, "started at 3.40 p.m. and we moved in artillery formation of platoons on a one company front following behind the Somerset Light Infantry. After about one thousand yards we extended to battle formation. When we came over the ridge in front of the fourth system we came into the German barrage, and as it was extremely thin we hardly had any casualties at all. We had great difficulty in getting through the German wire, which was forty yards thick in places, as our artillery had completely failed to cut it. The Boche was so anxious to give himself up and we were so anxious to get in that the confusion which reigned was so bad that no one could move either way through the gaps that did exist.

"It will always remain a mystery why the Boche put up no fight here. The wire was unbroken in front of them and a couple of machine-guns could have held up the advance of the whole Division. One hundred and forty prisoners were taken in the fourth system."

Soon after getting through the fourth system "we came under machine-gun fire from an inn on the Roeux-Gavrelle road and from Gavrelle. We soon managed to pick out the redoubt on account of the masses of wire which surrounded it, which we could see was completely intact. On our way up to it a large black dog came galloping out to meet us. When we came within twenty yards of it the football was drop-kicked by Corporal Bancroft into the redoubt and the place was rushed.* The various mopping-up parties under Bridgeman started clearing the dug-outs and after a time seven officers and nine men appeared.

"A staff officer tried to bolt down the road to Gavrelle and was at once shot by 'C' Company's sniping corporal."†

Meanwhile "B" Company had been dropped at the sunken road where it quickly mopped up the dug-outs and itself occupied trenches just east of the road which, incidentally, proved to be the enemy barrage-line.

"The consolidating parties got into position quickly and outposts and patrols were sent out. These, however, and all parties outside the redoubt were heavily fired on by the Germans who were lying out in the open between the redoubt and the Roeux-Gavrelle road and had organized their snipers very quickly."

In the brigade report on the operations, doubt is expressed whether troops so recently in a state of complete demoralization could have been re-organized so quickly; the view is put forward that these were fresh troops brought up from the rear who had rallied the retreating survivors of the garrison.

* The football was never seen again.

† Unfortunately there is no record of this corporal's name.

" The patrols could make no headway and the consolidating parties were being picked off one by one, so everyone was withdrawn inside the redoubt and all efforts were concentrated on consolidating the place. Schiff was most unfortunately shot through the heart just after having withdrawn his party.

" Up till dark we got several good targets for rifles and Lewis-guns and there is no doubt that the enemy suffered heavy casualties. These undoubtedly would have been considerably heavier had not the ammunition almost entirely run out.* Rifleman Dumbrill distinguished himself bringing a wounded man in and then he insisted on going out again to salve a Lewis-gun.

" 'B' Company in the meanwhile had consolidated its position. Unfortunately Jackson was hit and died on his way from the regimental aid post to the dressing station; a great loss to the Battalion. 'B' Company's Headquarters were in an enormous dug-out with seven entrances, in the sunken road, which had been the H.Q. of a German artillery general, and was full of maps, documents, etc.

" By this time it was getting dark. Germans were closing in on the north, south and east faces and had begun digging in in a semi-circle 200-400 yards off. The troops of the 12th Brigade on the right had not appeared and a counter-attack by two battalions was seen coming from the direction of Gavrelle. This attack was not pressed home and came under heavy fire from our artillery."

According to the Brigade and Battalion accounts machine-gun fire, as also rifle and Lewis-gun fire both from the redoubt and from the Hampshires on the left, contributed their share. Under the circumstances it is not surprising that this counter-attack came to naught.

" During the night some half-hearted attempts by the enemy to advance were frustrated and a patrol of four Prussians, who had been sent to recover some documents from the redoubt, was captured. Corporal Lodge spent most of the night patrolling in front of the wire and brought back some extremely useful information. He and Dumbrill and Rifleman Walker, who did wonderful work in bringing in the wounded, were all awarded the Military Medal, and Rifleman Greenwood was awarded the D.C.M. for bringing in Wellard who had been hit two hundred yards outside the wire. This gallant act was performed in spite of very heavy machine-gun fire.

" 'A' Company had lost all its officers and Sergeant Stanford took command and did good work in re-organizing the company and was awarded

* In fact, it was so low that a party from Battalion H.Q. was sent out to salve S.A.A., and the Officer Commanding 1st Bn. Royal Irish Fusiliers most kindly supplied several panniers for Lewis-guns.

the Military Medal for his work. Davison was in command in the redoubt with Waudby as the only other survivor of the officers of 'A' and 'C' Companies.

"The redoubt was occupied at about 4.30 p.m. and by 3 a.m. on April 10th the situation was fairly secure and touch had been gained with the 12th Brigade on the right. During the 9th a total of ten officers—including a general and his staff—and thirteen other ranks had been captured, also three heavy howitzers, a travelling kitchen, a machine-gun and much telephone equipment and a mass of official documents, orders and maps.

"Our casualties that day were Jackson and Schiff killed; Cavendish, Bridgeman, Day and Wellard wounded (the latter unfortunately died of wounds later), and one hundred and twenty-three other ranks killed, wounded and missing.

"The total depth of the advance made was six thousand yards beyond the German front line and the Battalion reached and held the furthest point of the whole British advance.

"It was a great day full of excitement and interest and was chiefly remarkable for the utter demoralization of the Boches and more especially for the extraordinary way in which the advances were made exactly up to time, according to the time-table laid down; it seemed far more like one of the many rehearsals than one of the greatest battles of the War.

"At mid-day on the 10th we were relieved by the 1st Bn. Somerset Light Infantry and stayed for forty-eight hours in the fourth German system." During this time, under orders received from the 4th Division, on the afternoon of the 10th strong patrols of the Somersets and Hampshires attempted to reach the Roeux-Gavrelle road; heavy machine-gun and rifle fire rendered the operation impossible, the Somersets' patrols being practically annihilated. On the 11th, the 12th and 10th Brigades attacked with Plouvain and Greenland Hill as their objectives, but once more machine-gun fire completely stopped the advance. In the 11th Brigade Diary there is a tragic map whereon one landmark is "line of dead Seaforths." The 2nd Bn. Seaforth Highlanders was in the 10th Brigade on the right of the 11th. During the attack cavalry patrols attempted to emerge from Fampoux; of those that were seen all became casualties within two or three minutes.

"On the 12th," the narrative continues, "the Battalion co-operated with the 9th Division on the right in an attack made on the German positions (over the same ground on which the 10th and 12th Brigades had failed the day before). 'A' and 'B' Companies assembled in a trench north of the redoubt with 'C' Company in support. Zero hour was 5.30 p.m., but long before that time the Germans had spotted the advance of the 9th

Division, who had come up across the open from a considerable distance back (1,000 yards).

"Our own assembly trenches were heavily bombarded by heavy artillery and swept by machine-gun fire from the north and east. At zero the whole of 'B' and the first wave of 'A' Company climbed out of the trenches, but in the face of such fire progress was impossible and in less than two minutes two officers and fifty-one men were casualties. Patterson and Spencer died gallant deaths standing up upon the parapet helping the men out of the very deep and muddy trenches. Serjeant Earle also was conspicuous for his gallantry on this occasion; he was badly wounded and has won the D.C.M. for his splendid example.

"The advance of the 9th Division could make no progress. Apart from the heavy fire we were subjected to, both in the trenches and getting over the parapet, the assembly trenches were very deep and the weather conditions had made them almost impossible, the mud being knee-deep in places and very sticky, and it was with the very greatest difficulty that the men scrambled up the slippery sides of the trench.

"The next four days were spent holding the trenches which were heavily and consistently shelled day and night. On the 15th 'B' Company was sent to support the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. in a bombing attack." This was not the first occasion upon which the latter battalion had been ordered to carry out such an attack during the past few days. How soon had Authority forgotten that axiom laid down by itself regarding bombing attacks!

The writer of the narrative himself comments:—"When the good show was done lives began to be wasted on a series of minor operations which proved hopeless. The weather conditions throughout were exceptionally severe and cover and shelter in the trenches were practically non-existent. On the 9th we started off in pouring rain at a very early hour, and though it was fine at mid-day and in the afternoon, yet later on there were heavy rain, hail and snow-storms. The same conditions existed on the 10th with a very heavy fall of snow at night, and the next two days were bitterly cold. The 13th and 14th were fine, but it rained all day on the 15th. The trenches were in an extremely bad condition with mud knee-deep and very sticky. From the 13th all communication trenches to the front were completely destroyed by shell-fire. One of the most amazing things of the whole show was that we received our rations and letters at 11 p.m. on the 9th—thanks to George Bland, who was commanding the carrying company (also to 'I' Company). On the evening of the 16th we were relieved by the 1st Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regt. and we went back to dug-outs and shelters in the old German first-line system" (north of St. Laurent Blangy).

Casualties for the week were :—four officers killed, five officers wounded (one died of wounds), two hundred and twenty-nine other ranks killed, wounded and missing, twenty-three evacuated sick.* The proportion of casualties among N.C.O.s was exceptionally severe.

After four days refitting in the Black Line the Battalion was relieved on April 20th by the Thirteenth Battalion and moved back by stages to Villers-Sir-Simon, where it remained for a week carrying out training.

Here the First Battalion may be left for the present in order to follow the fortunes of the three Battalions of the 14th Division during the initial stages of the Battle.

The Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Battalions. April 9th-12th, 1917. During the first week in April all three Battalions were moved into the "Caves." Quoting from the Seventh Battalion Diary :—

"The Caves are chalk excavations of considerable antiquity covering a large area under the suburbs and city of Arras. The depth varies from seventy to ninety feet and various exits have been cut for military requirements. They are lit by electricity throughout. Although damp and heavy atmosphere, there was a complete absence of noise from the guns ; the men were fairly comfortable and got good rest." The Caves were capable of holding two complete divisions, of which the 14th Division was one, and the appearance of these divisions on the battlefield was a tactical surprise to the enemy command.

The task allotted to the 14th Division was to capture and consolidate the hostile position as far as the Brown Line. The 56th Division of the same Corps (the VIIth) was on its right and the 3rd Division of the VIth Corps on its left.

The Division was to attack with two brigades in line, the 43rd Brigade on the right and the 42nd Brigade on the left ; the 41st Brigade was in reserve. It will therefore be more convenient to follow first the fortunes of the Ninth Battalion, returning later to the Seventh and Eighth in the 41st Brigade.

The first objective allotted to the 42nd Brigade was the String of the Harp—a line some two hundred yards east of the front face of that work : to this were allotted two battalions. The second objective, to which was allotted one battalion, was the Blue Line, which included portions of the rear face of the Harp and of the Cojeul Switch,† to the south.

* A remarkably low figure in such weather conditions.

† The Cojeul Switch ran from the southernmost portion of the Harp to a point in the Wancourt-Feuchy (the Brown) Line 1,300 yards west of Heninel.

To the Ninth Battalion was allotted the third objective; its task was to clear all ground between the Blue Line and the Wancourt-Tilloy road and to occupy an outpost line one thousand yards in length north-east of that road and about three hundred yards beyond it, thus forming a defensive flank on the left of the brigade.

For this two companies only were available, the remaining two being held in brigade reserve.

Sixteen tanks were to assist the attack of the 14th and 3rd Divisions on the Harp, and of these, four were subsequently to co-operate in the attack on the Cojeul Switch. Two or three tanks broke down or were disabled in No-man's land, but some did great service in the capture of Telegraph Hill.

As the Harp and the Cojeul Switch were from one thousand to fifteen hundred yards distance from the nearest trench of the old German front-line system (evacuated by the enemy during March), the Commander of the 42nd Brigade (Brig.-Gen. F. A. Dudgeon) had, previously to April 9th, dug two communication trenches forward and eight "parallels" for use as assembly trenches. By these means the assaulting troops were brought within six hundred yards of the front line of the Harp.

For the operation Colonel Pickering detailed "B" and "D" Companies under Captains Bradby and Buckley, leaving "A" and "C" Companies as brigade reserve.

At Zero hour—5.30 a.m.—the 3rd Division on the left was to assault but, owing to the configuration of the Black Line, it was not until 7.34 that the leading battalions of the 42nd Brigade were required to leave their assembly trenches and to creep up behind the barrage.

It will be recalled that the northernmost limit of the enemy retirement in March was just south of Tilloy-lez-Mofflaines—a point which coincided with the boundary between the VIIth and VIth Corps represented here by the 14th and 3rd Divisions.

By 2 a.m. the three leading battalions were to be in the assembly trenches and the Ninth Battalion was to be distributed, after that hour, with "B" and "D" Companies in the old German support trenches and "A" and "C" in the old German front lines. As the leading battalions pushed on, the Battalion was to move forward and occupy the assembly trenches as opportunity arose and was to be established there by 10.30 a.m.

The arrangements for leaving the Caves worked without a hitch and the battalions of the brigade occupied the assembly trenches in good time. Some justifiable anxiety had existed before as to the treatment by the enemy of those trenches during the long wait of over two hours before the

lightly shelled by 77 mm. A captured German officer subsequently stated that he had not noticed the existence of the trenches, nor had his attention been called to them. As a fact there was, undisturbed, an issue of tea and rum whilst in the assembly trenches.

The two companies under Captains Bradby and Buckley left the assembly trenches by platoons in plenty of time to get under the artillery barrage, which was well defined and placed. At 12.18 p.m. the advance began with the 43rd Brigade on the right and the 8th Brigade of the 3rd Division on the left, the destination of these brigades being the Brown Line.

Three platoons advanced and established the left defensive flank of the objective with slight opposition. During the advance the commandant of a "Sturm" battalion and a few prisoners were captured. The platoon detailed to hold the left half of the frontal objective reached it early. The above parties were in their appointed places by 1.30 p.m. and were digging themselves in where necessary. A platoon under 2nd-Lieutenant W. C. Pickering quickly reached the extreme right front of the objective and established itself there, having captured a few prisoners on the way.

Two platoons had to skirt Telegraph Hill, which was being heavily shelled when they advanced, and were taken off too much to their right, but eventually established the right flank, the whole objective being attained and in process of consolidation by 2.15 p.m.

Meanwhile the mopping-up party for the area between the second and third objectives had started work immediately. About two-thirds of the way towards the objective there were two German works ; of these one, a square of trenches, had been completely obliterated by our artillery and was hardly recognizable, whilst the other, a small triangular redoubt, contained a few of the enemy who gave trouble with machine-guns ; this redoubt was precisely on the boundary between the Battalion and the 8th Brigade on the left. Captain Bradby, commanding "B" Company, was shot through the heart in attempting to rush the machine-guns with men of his company, and Captain Buckley with eight other ranks—runners and signallers—then stalked the guns and eventually got up to them, when, at the same moment, some of the 8th Brigade came up from the north. Sixty Germans with two machine-guns surrendered and were promptly sent up the road to Tilloy. This instance of co-operation between neighbouring battalions is the more remarkable in that the partners to it belonged to different brigades, divisions and even different corps. Touch was early obtained also on the right flank with the 43rd Brigade, but it was hard to maintain actual contact with the troops of the 3rd Division as the latter passed across the front of the Battalion on their way towards the Brown Line. Reconnoitring patrols, however, were pushed out in front with impunity.

During the day the Battalion captured two officers and one hundred and seven other ranks ; those in the redoubt and some others were "Sturm" troops. The Ninth Battalion account closes with a pat on the back for the carrier-pigeons "who did well and were the safest method of communication."

Casualties during the day were Captain D. E. Bradby killed, 2nd-Lieutenant H. M. Smith wounded, and fifteen other ranks.

The death of Captain Bradby was a great loss to the Battalion. Efficient in every way, he had also raised the Battalion Rugby XV. The side included Moore (Uppingham and Oxford) as Captain, Round (Marlborough), Bradby (Rugby), Irving (Christ's Hospital), Pickering and Letts (Haileybury), Bateman-Champain (Cheltenham and Oxford), and last, but by no means least, Colonel Pickering (Eton). The side, made up with other ranks, mostly Northern Union players, won all its matches except one, which was drawn.

The Battalion was withdrawn to the old German front line until April 11th, when it became the left front battalion of the brigade in front of the Wancourt-Tilloy road. On the same day, however, hurried orders were received by the 42nd Brigade that it would be relieved that night by the 149th Brigade of the 50th Division.

Accordingly the Battalion, upon relief, moved by stages to Lattre-St. Quentin—some nine miles west of Arras—and on the 14th marched to Beaudricourt—another eight miles to the south-west.

Here it remained, re-organizing and carrying out such training as the shocking weather permitted, until April 23rd, when the 42nd Brigade was moved up once more towards the line. During the interval the Brigade Commander addressed all units and complimented them on their fine work on April 9th. The Commander-in-Chief also visited Brigade H.Q. and congratulated all ranks on the results of their action.

On the night of the 24th/25th the Battalion took over from the 151st Brigade, 50th Division, part of the line between Chérisy and the Cojeul River, which had only recently been captured. The Battalion remained there until the 28th, when it moved to the Cojeul Switch in reserve. During this tour in the line there was at times heavy shelling—heavier, according to the brigade account, than on the Somme the year before. Casualties were 2nd-Lieutenant J. M. Harper wounded and forty other ranks. Here the Ninth Battalion may be left whilst returning to April 9th to record events as they befell the Seventh and Eighth Battalions.

As has been seen, the 41st Brigade on April 9th was in divisional reserve. The brigade began to leave the Caves at 7.34 a.m. and by 10.25

a.m. was formed up in its position of assembly in the old British front-line system.

The brigade was in two lines, the Seventh Battalion on the left of the front line with the Eighth Battalion in second line behind it ; the 7th and 8th Bns. 60th were in corresponding positions on the right. During the day portions of the 7th Bn. 60th and Seventh Battalion moved forward and occupied the first and second trenches of the old German front-line system and the brigade remained in this position throughout the night.

In the Eighth Battalion Corporal French was killed and Captain C. N. Thompson, Lieutenant D. F. Foxwell, and Rifleman Marks were wounded.

At 11 a.m., April 10th, the 41st Brigade was ordered forward to Telegraph Hill, but whilst on the move further orders were received to proceed to the relief of the 43rd Brigade on the Brown Line near Wancourt.

Accordingly the two 7th Battalions moved forward to the Cojeul Switch and at 2.15 p.m. resumed their advance, their places in the switch being taken by the two 8th Battalions. At this time the 43rd Brigade had not reached the Brown Line on the actual front allotted to it and had not been able to obtain complete possession of the portion gained, the enemy still holding strongly the second line in the southern portion of the objective.

The final move of the Seventh Battalion started with two brigades of cavalry which had come up on the left flank.

" * A heavy snowstorm was in progress, blowing in the faces of the enemy and to a certain extent screening movement, but a considerable hostile artillery barrage and heavy machine-gun fire from Wancourt and the ridge behind caused some casualties. The cavalry advance was checked by wire in front of the objective. The 43rd (Infantry) Brigade withdrew as the Battalion took over its position ; the cavalry did the same after dark—having suffered heavily—and the situation remained stationary for the time." Meanwhile the 7th Bn. 60th, on the right, found the enemy in occupation of the trenches opposite them but, under cover of the snow-storm, managed to enter the first trench, capturing some twenty prisoners.

The enemy wire was strong, thick, and almost entirely un-cut, but the chief obstacle was machine-gun fire enfilading the Brown Line and sweeping across the front of advance from Hill 90 (south-west of Wancourt) on the front of the 56th Division.

At about 4.30 p.m. the Eighth Battalion received orders to advance and clear up the situation in the direction of Wancourt and Hill 90.

The Battalion advanced in artillery formation for half a mile, and

* From Seventh Battalion account written by Lieut.-Colonel de Calry.

coming under a light artillery barrage and machine-gun fire, deployed. The advance was continued in the snowstorm already referred to but, when this lifted, it was discovered that the leading companies were in an exposed position about eight hundred yards west of Wancourt and suffering from machine-gun fire from the direction of Wancourt Cemetery and Hill 90. Lieutenant H. R. Adair (O.C. "D" Company) and 2nd-Lieutenant N. F.H. Mather were wounded here.

There being no sign of any troops on the right a defensive flank was formed on the line of the Wancourt-Neuville Vitasse road. Patrols were pushed out and touch obtained with the 56th Division about midway between these two villages.

By evening the position was as follows:—the Eighth Battalion was facing south along the Wancourt-Neuville Vitasse road and held no part of the enemy trenches of the Brown Line. Thence for five hundred yards northwards and facing east the 7th Bn. 60th held the front-line trench while the enemy held the second line; thence the Seventh Battalion held both lines of trenches for a further one thousand yards.

The enemy had dug a third line in front of the 7th Bn. 60th and another line facing north just in front of Wancourt; the latter village was strongly wired.

At 2 a.m., April 11th, the 41st Brigade received orders to attack Wancourt at 6.30 a.m. and then to advance to the high ground to the south-east of the village on the further side of the Cojeul River.

An artillery barrage by two groups of field artillery was arranged which was to remain on the whole of the Brown Line for ten minutes before moving back: the infantry were to withdraw for some two hundred yards from the portions of the system held by them and then to attack under the barrage. An attack on Hill 90 by the 56th Division was ordered to begin an hour earlier to neutralize the machine-gun fire from that hill. This latter attack did not make progress rapidly enough to be of any assistance.

To quote from the Seventh Battalion Diary:—"Our artillery barrage entirely failed and the advance was checked from the very beginning by heavy machine-gun fire from the front and in enfilade from right and rear."

In this operation the Eighth Battalion was in support of the 7th Bn. 60th. Here also the attack was caught by cross machine-gun fire; the 60th suffered heavily, particularly in officers, and "A" Company, Eighth Battalion, lost its commander, 2nd-Lieutenant B. Franklin, wounded—and twenty other rank casualties.

During the afternoon, after sending out patrols a line was established by "C" Company joining up the brigade with the 56th Division.

That night both the Seventh and Eighth Battalions appear to have been

relieved, but each War Diary claims that its Battalion was relieved by the other! The weather and conditions generally were so dreadful that each battalion probably considered any change as a "relief." In any case the Eighth Battalion went into the Brown Line and the Seventh Battalion into brigade reserve.

During the night of the 11th/12th April the 41st Brigade received orders to occupy Wancourt only after Hill 90 had been captured by the 56th Division and then to advance to the high ground south-east of the village to a line running from Wancourt Tower north-eastwards to the River Cojeul. Enemy machine-gun and rifle fire were active all night, but patrols pushed out in the early morning towards Wancourt found, eventually, that the village had been abandoned, but for a few stragglers and snipers who later were taken prisoners.

About 5 a.m. a patrol from "B" Company, Eighth Battalion, penetrated into Wancourt and Marlière. Patrols were also pushed out in an easterly direction and touch was gained with the enemy who was holding Guémappe in force, although this village had, the previous day, been reported as in possession of the 3rd Division.

After several attempts "C" Company, on the left, was able to join up with the 3rd Division and a line was consolidated from the right of the 3rd Division to Marlière. During the action "C" Company captured a 77 mm. field gun but lost its commander, Lieutenant T. A. Baldock, wounded. At 11 a.m. orders were issued for an attack to be launched on the high ground south-east of Wancourt; the 8th Bn. 60th, on the right, crossing the Cojeul south of Wancourt, and the Battalion, on the left, crossing the river east of the village. The operation was not carried out as it involved moving the whole Battalion straight across the enemy's front at Guémappe for a distance of about a mile—a decision with which few soldiers will quarrel.

At 2.30 p.m. orders were again issued for an assault on the high ground south-east of Wancourt. The 8th Bn. 60th with the Eighth Battalion in support was to cross the river south of Wancourt.

The mud was very deep and sticky and by 5 p.m. (half an hour before the assault was due to take place) only two companies of the leading battalion and one company and H.Q. of that in support had succeeded in effecting the passage of the river. The enemy, seeing the concentration of troops, at the moment our 18-pdr. barrage started put down a heavy barrage of 5.9 and 4.2 on the valley of the Cojeul from Héninel to Wancourt. Before the assault had even started the whole area to be covered was subjected to heavy machine-gun fire from north and south of the river and from the high ground south-east of Wancourt. It was found impossible

for the men to get forward and the attack was abandoned. Eventually during the evening a continuous line was established from the left of the 56th Division near Héninel to the right of the 3rd Division about one thousand yards west of Guémappe.

That night the 41st Brigade was relieved by the 151st Brigade of the 50th Division and returned to Arras. The two 8th Battalions were so completely foundered that they could only struggle back a short distance by 5 a.m., completing the journey during the course of the day as and when they could.

The Seventh Battalion had remained in brigade reserve during the 12th and was not called upon.

Casualties in the two Battalions between April 9th and 13th were, in the Seventh Battalion, one officer and nine other ranks killed, two officers and eighty other ranks wounded and four missing : in the Eighth Battalion twenty-eight other ranks killed, five officers and sixty-eight other ranks wounded, and five missing.

On the 14th and 15th the 41st Brigade moved westwards for what were believed to be but a few days' rest and re-organization.

The Seventh Battalion went to Sombrin, some thirteen miles south-west of Arras, and the Eighth to Grand Rullecourt, a mile further. There they remained training and re-organizing until April 23rd, when they moved eastwards again towards the line. On the 26th they were at the southern end of the Harp in divisional reserve and remained there until the end of the month, finding the usual working parties.

During this period the Seventh Battalion had two other ranks killed and seven wounded.

So much for the actions of the three Battalions in the 14th Division during the opening stages of the battle. There remain to be recorded, during the same period, the doings of the Thirteenth Battalion in the 37th Division.

On April 5th the Battalion began to move forward to take its place for the battle, reaching bivouac at Wagnonlieu on the 8th, where it spent the night.

The Thirteenth
Battalion.
Monchy-le-Preux.
April 9th-11th,
1917.

On this day (Easter Sunday) one hundred and fifty communicants attended a celebration of the Holy Communion. Colonel Pretor-Pinney, commanding the Battalion, held a conference and gave his final instructions for the morrow :—" Gentlemen, we will take Monchy, or die ! "

It will be remembered that the 37th Division was to be in reserve to

the VIth Corps. The part allotted to the division was to pass through the leading divisions, after these had captured the Brown Line, and to secure the Green Line. From the time brigades left our original front-line system they were to be prepared to support the leading divisions—in the case of the 111th Brigade the 12th or 15th Divisions.

The ensuing account of the action is taken from that by Colonel Pretor-Pinney in the Battalion War Diary and from a private description written by Lieutenant L. S. Chamberlen, who was Battalion intelligence and signalling officer.

The Battalion left camp near Wagnonlieu as rear battalion of the brigade and marched with various halts round the north side of Arras to a position of assembly, beyond the Black Line—near Fred's Wood. About 5 p.m., as reserve battalion of the brigade, it moved in artillery formation towards the Brown Line, there being a considerable amount of hostile shelling. At about 8 p.m. a message was received to say that the 10th and 13th Bns. Royal Fusiliers were held up and were digging in along the Feuchy-Feuchy Chapel road (just west of the Brown Line). Accordingly the Battalion took up a position in rear of the 13th Bn. Royal Fusiliers, who had asked for support, two companies in front line and one in support with four Lewis-guns in shell-holes echeloned on the left to form a defensive flank. Connection was finally established with the 8th Bn. Somerset Light Infantry (63rd Brigade)* on the left on and about Orange Hill.

Events so far are thus described by Lieutenant Chamberlen :—

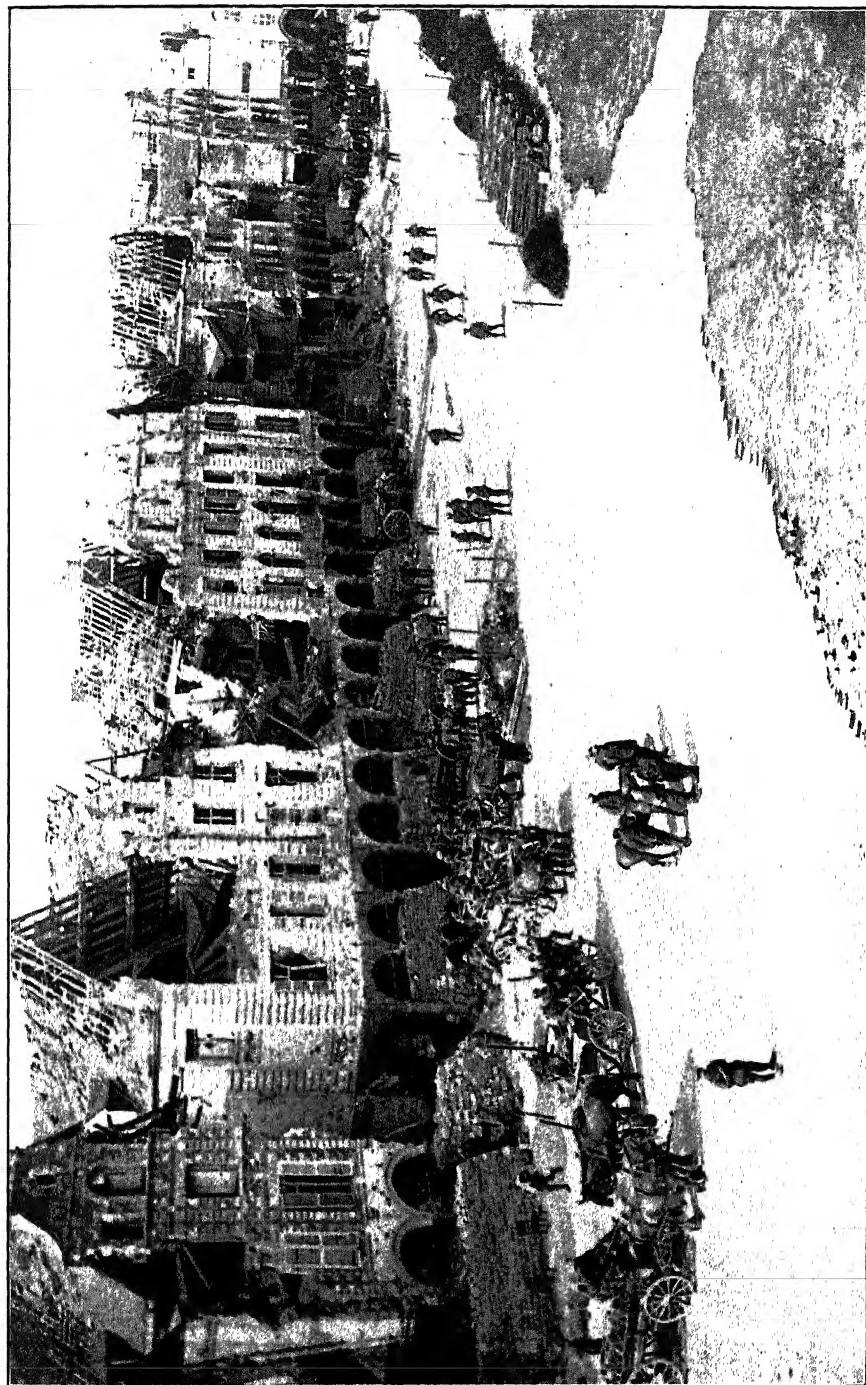
“ April 9th, 5.29, all quiet, then crash—three thousand guns go off accompanied by thousands of bombs—distant cheering, the first wave is over! The Boches send up numbers of S.O.S. rockets and at 5.45 the enemy barrage falls. The whole landscape before us is now a mass of whirling smoke, flashes and frightful tumult.

“ Suddenly a mile to our right an immense explosion, an enemy shell has hit a dump on the outskirts of Arras in the Faubourg d'Amiens—a huge cloud of black and white smoke like an immense mushroom hangs above it for a time and then disperses. On our left (north) we see the shells bursting over Vimy Ridge. What has happened?

“ We march on awe-struck—it's the biggest show in the world's history and we are for it.

“ We move on—suddenly—cheers! the first batch of prisoners (ninety-one) come past; then, ten minutes later, four hundred all ranks—and others are seen coming from Vimy Ridge. At 11.30 a.m. tea is brought up by transport and at 12.10 we move on to our final assembly place near Blangy.

* The Infantry Brigades of the 37th Division since the beginning of the Battle of the Somme were the 63rd, 111th and 112th, the latter commanded by Brig.-Gen. MacLachlan.



ARRAS.

9th April, 1917.

Imperial War Museum—Copyright.

We moved through Arras by platoons at a hundred yards intervals with many halts as the roads were crowded with troops, wounded, artillery limbers and ambulances.

" At 1.15 p.m. we reached an assembly position near Blangy and partook of a meal—bully-beef, biscuits, chocolate and tea. Here the enemy put a few gas-shells amongst us but there were no casualties.

" At 3.20 p.m. we advanced again (the Battalion being the rear-most in the brigade) in artillery formation and went over our old front-line system and on through Blangy Chateau grounds (blown to bits) until we reached the Railway Triangle (near Fred's Wood), where we remained an hour. An unlucky shell in the Chateau gardens knocked out six men of 'D' Company (two killed) but no one else. Whilst here (Railway Triangle) rumour came that the Boches were on the run and suddenly three 'bridging-trains' came past us—covering the trenches as they went.

" Cavalry and artillery up! It was the 3rd Cavalry Division—3rd Dragoon Guards, 10th Hussars and Essex Yeomanry. They formed mass between our lines here and dismounted—next minute we were off.

" We moved over Observation Ridge, sections two hundred yards apart all round, and when five hundred yards across the plateau towards Battery Valley suddenly came under terrific machine-gun fire from the Boche Third Line: a few 5.9's and 8-inch came over also, but the enemy was doing more counter-battery work against our artillery behind us. Despite enemy's fire we continued to advance in artillery formation of sections without heavy casualties until about 5.30 p.m., when dusk, snow and fire held up the leading battalions—10th and 13th Bns. Royal Fusiliers—and we (four hundred yards in rear) had to halt and dig in near the Feuchy-Feuchy Chapel road."

The Battalion account is as follows :—

" At 4 a.m., April 10th, we received an order to march at once to a point about five hundred yards south-east of Feuchy and to report to G.O.C., 63rd Infantry Brigade. We moved there and occupied a position with the 13th Bn. 60th on our right. About 11 a.m. we received an order to be ready to form up at 12 noon to move to the attack on Monchy-le-Preux. The Battalion moved in artillery formation as the reserve battalion of the brigade (111th). The advance was held up at 5 p.m. I saw the O.C. 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers, who asked for as much support as we could give. I sent up two companies to the latter battalion and to the 13th Bn. Royal Fusiliers and kept one company on the plateau west of Monchy with four Lewis-guns.

" The situation was now as under :—

" 10th and 13th Bns. Royal Fusiliers had withdrawn about three hundred

yards from the entrance to the village and were digging in assisted by the 154th Field Company R.E. Two companies of the Battalion were sent up in support or to move into the line if necessary.

"Two companies 13th Bn. 60th were also in line or in support. One company 60th was in reserve about one thousand yards west of the northern point of Monchy. One company of the Battalion was digging in one hundred and fifty yards in rear of this company and groups of Lewis-guns were disposed protecting the flanks.

"At 6 p.m. I saw the commander of the artillery group and explained the situation to him. He came into action on Germans to the south of Monchy. I also saw the staff officer of the cavalry brigade in rear (8th Cavalry Brigade?) and asked him for support if necessary.

"At 12.30 a.m., April 11th, I saw the Brigade-Major and received verbal orders to attack at 5 a.m.—ourselves on the left—13th Bn. 60th on the right. 13th Bn. Royal Fusiliers supporting us and 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers supporting the 60th.

"I only had time to issue verbal orders and get the companies into position. Owing to the difficulties of collecting companies in the assembly trench the Battalion moved forward to the attack at 5.5 a.m.

"I had two companies in two waves in front—one company in two waves in support—four Lewis-guns on the left which I judged to be the exposed flank. As soon as they reached the village I went forward with H.Q. to a point just outside the extreme north-westerly point of Monchy. On moving forward I rallied and collected a good many stragglers of various battalions and with my H.Q. occupied a trench facing north-east at this point. Later in the day when the 63rd Brigade had come up I communicated with the O.C. 4th Bn. Middlesex Regt. in House No. 15 in the village.

"We were finally relieved about 10.30 p.m., when we marched back to the Brown Line, near which we bivouacked and moved on to Battery Valley in the early morning where we rejoined the brigade." *

Lieutenant Chamberlen's story of these two days—April 10th and 11th—differs somewhat from the Battalion account, but is considered well worth quoting.

"At 1.30 a.m. orders came to move at once and take up another position ready to support the 15th Division (Highland Light Infantry) in an attack at dawn on the Boche lines (on the Brown Line just south of the railway) which had held them up the previous day. Heavy snow fell all the time until 8 a.m., when we were told that the enemy had retired on our fourth objective, leaving isolated strong points here and there, especially on Orange

* Here Colonel Pretor-Pinney's account ends; he was destined to be killed in the second phase of the Battle.

Hill and Chapel Hill. At 9 a.m. we moved back again and formed for the advance on Monchy-le-Preux, our final objective, with the front wave lining the Chapel road and facing Orange Hill.

"Great excitement was now aroused by the appearance of about twenty batteries of R.F.A. and 6-inch guns from Battery Valley who were to co-operate with the 37th Division, now leading the attack. The 3rd Cavalry Division also came up at 10 a.m. and formed up on our left flank. The Boche hadn't seen us yet . . .

"At 10.30 a.m. the advance began. The 112th Brigade was on our right and the 63rd on our left; seven tanks also accompanied us but only one reached Monchy. As soon as our heads appeared above the crest the enemy opened fire with 5.9's, 4.2's, 3-inch and gas shells, but not very heavily. A few enemy machine-guns were put out (in a trench on the western slope of Orange Hill) by tanks, and the wire crushed, so that we could get on pretty easily, the ground being fairly hard despite the snow.

"The cavalry now moved up, but as soon as they appeared every sort of weapon opened on us and casualties began to be frequent.

"The cavalry had to withdraw to Battery Valley until the enemy should become less aggressive. Here I saw an orderly riding and leading another horse downed by a 5.9 woolly bear bursting almost on his head; he and the led horse were badly wounded but the other horse escaped. Pidsley shot the wounded horse with his revolver. Our advance was very slow over Orange Hill owing to shells and bullets amongst us.

"Nightfall found the 10th and 13th Bns. Royal Fusiliers' front line still west of Monchy and forty per cent. laid out. The 60th had lost 200 out of 500 and we 80 out of 500. The Boches had us absolutely taped and we had to halt and dig like moles. Captain Bowyer ('A' Company) was killed about 7 p.m. and Serjeant Carter (No. '1'—my late—Platoon) was also killed. Serjeant Champion, A/Corporal Brooker and the signallers did wonders keeping the line open to Brigade H.Q.—everyone behaved magnificently.

"Colonel Pinney, Archbold and Pidsley were in H.Q. (an 8-inch shell hole) and Frankish (Pidsley's servant) had made tea for us—joy! I was feeling pretty well chilled to the bone, soaked and deuced hungry. So a tin of bully, a few biscuits (our last) were devoured and we tried to sleep a bit in turn. Question:—Would 'C' Company (ration carriers) arrive before dawn when we should inevitably advance again?

"At 3.30 a.m. (April 11th) orders came to move at 4 a.m.—still no rations—but at 3.40—joy—up they came plus rum! I just had time to issue everything and force the men to have a feed, despite their hatred of bully, before we moved. Rifleman 'X,' aged nineteen, got tight on the

rum on an empty stomach, so I left him to guard the spare ammunition (!) with Rifleman 'Y' and to report to me later.

"At 4 a.m. we moved and formed up for our last assault. We had 'B' and 'D' Companies up (from right to left) and 'A' and H.Q. in reserve. Colonel Rice (10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers) joined forces with our H.Q. until we assaulted.

"The enemy was quiet whilst we made ready for the assault. At 5 a.m. all were ready and eager to advance. I 'phoned dispositions to Brigade H.Q. and answer came to advance. The brigade started in 'Blobs' but soon extended into waves and dashed up into the village, splitting up into small parties to deal with houses, cellars, and strong points still held by the Huns.

"Meanwhile the enemy barrage came down on us and machine-guns opened on us from in front and on both flanks where the 112th and 63rd Brigades were having a tough time. H.Q. moved on slowly and finally established itself in a line of hastily dug trench and shell-holes at 6.15 a.m.

"The enemy had retired from the village and high ground towards the Bois du Vert and the Bois du Sart (about 2,000 yards east of Monchy) and intermediate cover, leaving forty prisoners in our hands and two hundred dead, also some sixteen machine-guns and four 5.9 howitzers. Their other guns had been evacuated on the previous evening when we were on Orange Hill held up. The companies were digging in on the east edge of the village along our last objective : the enemy shelling gradually increased to absolute drum-fire and casualties increased.

"Hobday was killed and Carlisle, Reepmaker, Spooner, Wardlaw and Chamberlen were wounded. I remained at duty, but the others went down. Rhys took over 'A' Company and Bampfield 'B'—the latter doing great work in re-organizing the front line and village defences, at the same time taking in many men from another division who had come up. C.S.-Ms Manktelow ('A') and Oliver ('B') were wounded. Colonel Rice, 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers (badly shattered arm), Colonel Leyton 13th Bn. Royal Fusiliers killed, and twelve officers of the 13th Bn. 60th killed, or wounded. At 9.30 a.m. the Boche began to return, thinking that his fire had laid us low, but when three hundred yards away sixteen Lewis-guns and five hundred rifles told them another tale and the few who got away didn't return that day ; but, by Jove, their gunners warmed us up a bit !

"The story of the cavalry was a tragedy. A rumour spread that the Boche had retired to Boiry Notre Dame (some two miles east of Monchy) and beyond and the 8th Cavalry Brigade (Brig.-Gen. C. B. Bulkeley-Johnson*) was sent up from Feuchy to go through Monchy and pursue.

* He was killed early this day.

At 12 noon (?) they appeared galloping up by squadrons—Cheers! The enemy saw them, however, and shelled them so terribly that in ten minutes fifty per cent. were down. The rest dismounted, left their horses in the village, and reinforced our lines, where they behaved magnificently.* Only sixty horses out of four hundred escaped. Suffice it to say that during the remainder of the day the enemy shelling and machine-gun fire were terrific. Our artillery was prevented from coming up close by the heavy mud but poured in a tremendous fire nevertheless. Our last tank did excellent work round Monchy and south to Guémappe, operating without stopping for forty hours ("The Times" mentioned it afterwards)—unfortunately it got knocked out by a direct hit about 4 p.m. but the crew escaped. Its commander, whom I met in hospital at Avesnes-le-Comte on the 14th, was kicked by a mule and broke his wrist after reaching Arras, and so came home."

There were of course numberless cases of gallantry and devotion during these operations, but, at the risk of being invidious, the names of those who came under Lieutenant Chamberlen's personal observation are here recorded as he mentions them.

"A/Corporal Roff, Riflemen Bearton and Thorpe (runners)—also Corporal Caperon did excellent work during the day, but towards evening (5 p.m.) the two latter were wounded and went down.

"The enemy made no further advances and indeed never showed himself at all. At 6 p.m., having kept our line open to Brigade H.Q. an order came to prepare for an attack half right on Guémappe which had held up the 112th Brigade. I took the orders verbally (by telephone) from our staff captain (acting brigade-major) and repeated them to Colonel Pinney, who was now in command of the four battalions in the village and precincts, being senior to Colonel Chester-Master, 13th Bn. 60th.

"He, however, rang up again and took them himself from Captain Paris, and was about to send orders to the companies to move, when Paris rang up again to say 'Wash-out'—you will be relieved by the 29th Division as early as possible and they will carry out the attack.

"We being down to forty per cent. of our original strength, and about done up, said 'Thank God!'—made a meal of what bully and biscuits we had left, and then went out to see who 'was' and who 'was not.' Altogether we saved some fifty wounded, many half buried in snow, including a few Boches. The Battalion stretcher-bearers, under A/Corporal Fowler, aided by Riflemen Hamilton and Tucker, also Furniss, who was killed, did splendid

* The War Diary of the 8th Cavalry Brigade states that there was no infantry in Monchy except such details as were got hold of by the cavalry in the western portion of the village and put on to collecting tools and wounded and to digging. If this was the case, the above tribute from the infantry to the cavalry must be considered unreliable and ignored.

work and saved many poor fellows. At 7.30 p.m. it was pitch dark and heavy snow came on again, but we still searched for the wounded.

"Meanwhile the companies in the village were fairly sheltered and a dressing-station was established in the remains of a villa which had been a Boche Brigade H.Q. and in which a bag of Iron Crosses was found by 'A' Company—ready for distribution after our defeat!"

The account ends by recording that "the Battalion was relieved that night by a battalion of the Royal West Kent Regt. and by 6 a.m. was once more in the Battery Valley sleeping in the remains of the gun-emplacements.

"Three hundred guns, chiefly 5.9's and field-guns, were smashed or taken in that valley, which well deserved its name."

That night the Battalion was billeted in cellars in Arras and the officers, ten in number, assembled for dinner at the only good estaminet left intact. Early next morning, the 13th, another move was made, by 'bus, to Agnez-les-Duisans, where Lieutenant Chamberlen was evacuated home, consequent on his wound and frost-bite.

Casualties recorded in the Battalion War Diary for this period—April 9th/12th—were, among other ranks, thirty killed and died of wounds and one hundred and thirty-four wounded. Casualties to officers have been mentioned during the narrative.

On the 14th the Battalion marched to Villers-Sir-Simon (twelve miles west of Arras), where it remained for three nights—cleaning, re-fitting and training. Peace, however, was not for long, for, on the 17th, heads were once more turned eastwards and by the 19th the Battalion was back in Agnez-les-Duisans, whence it marched next day to take over, from the First Battalion, the support trenches north of the River Scarpe (the old Black Line running north and south through the village of St. Laurent Blangy). Here it remained for three nights until the 23rd, when the second phase of the Battle of Arras—known officially as "The Second Battle of the Scarpe"—was due to begin.

The 37th Division was now in the XVIIth Corps—the left Corps of the Third Army.

THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE SCARPE.

Quoting once more from Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches:—

"On the 16th April our Allies launched their main offensive on the Aisne, and shortly after that date the weather on the Arras front began to improve. Our preparations made more rapid progress, and plans were made to deliver our next attack on the 21st April. High winds and indifferent visibility persisted, however, and so interfered with the work of

our artillery and aeroplanes that it was found necessary to postpone operations for a further two days."

The Third and First Armies were to attack and secure the general line (so far as this account is concerned) Roeux-Gavrelle.

In the XVIIth Corps the 51st Division was on the right and the 37th Division on the left. On the left again was the 63rd (Royal Naval) Division * of the XIIIth Corps, First Army.

In accordance with this plan, the 37th Division attacked with two brigades in line; the 63rd Brigade on the right with the 111th Brigade on the left and the 112th Brigade in divisional reserve.

The final objective of the 111th Brigade was the Plouvain-Gavrelle road. The brigade orders added that, after the objective had been captured, patrols were to be pushed out to make good the spur running north-eastwards to Square Wood. As soon as these patrols had secured any ground they would be reinforced by Lewis-gun posts which would become the jumping-off places from which the patrols could again push forward.

The 111th Brigade attacked with the 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers, 13th Bn. of the same Regiment, and 13th Bn. 60th in the front line and the Thirteenth Battalion in reserve—the left of the 60th directing and moving roughly west to east on the southern edge of Square Wood.

The three leading battalions were to carry through to the final objective and to push out patrols as detailed above.

The Thirteenth Battalion was to move forward in rear of the 60th and would be prepared to form a defensive flank facing north should the attack on Gavrelle fail. It would halt in the captured German front-line trenches pending the receipt of further orders. It would, however, move forward to assist the advance of the 189th Brigade (63rd Division) if the commanding officer considered it advisable.

It will be observed that any anxiety regarding the success of the attack was confined to the attack on Gavrelle—to the north of the 111th Brigade.

To assist the attack two hundred "Liven's Projectors" † had been installed and were to discharge gas, if the wind proved favourable, on the evening before, but as there is no further mention of them, the wind, presumably, proved unfavourable.

The story of the attack is no more easy to record than must have been its execution by the troops engaged. By 9 a.m. command of the Battalion

* Care is necessary to avoid confusing the 63rd (R.N.) Division with the 63rd Brigade of the 37th Division.

† These projectors, called after Captain Liven of the Special Companies R.E., were old oil drums converted into rough mortars.

had changed hands no fewer than three times and the course of events had borne little resemblance to that anticipated.

Zero hour was 4.45 a.m., April 23rd, and an hour before that the Battalion formed up about eight hundred yards north-east of Le Point du Jour with two companies in front line and one company in reserve with the four Lewis-guns of "A" Company. (No mention is made of the fourth company.)

At Zero hour the Battalion moved forward in artillery formation, marching on a compass bearing of 104 degrees. Very soon after the Battalion started, the enemy put down a heavy barrage of 5.9-inch H.E. Casualties were very heavy going through this barrage but the men continued to advance without a halt. Just before reaching the enemy's wire they came upon what appeared to be assembly trenches.*

The first wave halted in these, the officers leading it having been either killed, or wounded; but the second wave of the leading company joined the first and together they pushed on through the enemy's wire into his trenches, which they at once began to consolidate, finding a few Germans still in the dug-outs. Before long a bombing attack by the enemy started on the right flank. 2nd-Lieutenant W. M. Smith got together a party, spreading out on both sides of the trench, and attacked and captured the German bombing party.

Soon after this, orders were received by Captain Hon. R. W. Morgan-Grenville to assume command of the Battalion, as Colonel Pretor-Pinney had been badly wounded,† but, on going back to find Battalion H.Q., he was himself severely wounded, and command devolved upon Captain C. N. C. Boyle.

For the period of operations, Major A. N. S. Jackson, D.S.O., had been attached as liaison officer with the 63rd Brigade, but he was now recalled to assume command of the Battalion and reached H.Q., 111th Brigade, at 7.30 a.m. Here he was informed that the Battalion was following in rear of the 60th, but was told to stop it if possible as it might be required to support the 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers, on the right.

About 9 a.m. Major Jackson found the Battalion in the captured German trenches opposite Gavrelle—somewhat disorganized and mixed up with the 63rd Division. The four Lewis-guns of "A" Company were missing and all that could be found of the Battalion were four officers and one hundred and twenty other ranks. The enemy was shelling heavily, placing a barrage in front and behind.

* The 37th Division had originally intended to have assembly trenches dug close up to the enemy wire, but there had not been time to dig them—or, perhaps, complete them.

† His lamented death from his wounds occurred on the 28th.

At 10 a.m. orders were received to get into touch with the 60th and to go up and assist them in the consolidation of the final objective. 2nd-Lieutenant W. M. Smith was sent out with a small patrol to find the O.C. 60th, the Battalion, meanwhile, being organized for the advance. Owing to companies being mixed up in the trench, "D" Company, which was strongest, was ordered to move out into shell-holes in front to form a first wave while the remains of the other two companies formed a second.

2nd-Lieutenant Smith returned and reported the position of the O.C. 60th and the Battalion then moved forward—the enemy barraging heavily the right flank, which had some casualties.

The Battalion lined the sunken road which runs almost due south from Gavrelle to Rœux and there dug in. The situation not being clear on the final objective, and the right flank of the 60th being in the air, their commanding officer did not wish the Thirteenth Battalion to move forward until further reconnaissance had been made, as it was thought that the Battalion would probably have to form a defensive flank to cover the right of the 60th.

At 12.30 p.m. the two commanding officers went up to reconnoitre the position ; they found the enemy holding in some strength the high ground near the cross-roads about one thousand yards north-west of Greenland Hill and more of the enemy coming in. The 60th, who were dug in on the Plouvain-Gavrelle road (the final objective and also sunken), were completely enfiladed from the cross-roads and had had casualties from rifle-fire : "The situation," comments the Battalion War Diary, "was certainly unsatisfactory."

Actually, the situation was as follows. On the left—the flank upon which the 37th Division had previously cast an anxious eye—the 63rd Division had captured Gavrelle and was through and beyond the village.

Its 189th Brigade had been accompanied by elements of the Thirteenth Battalion who had been carried on with it ; this co-operation, although more fortuitous than the remarkable combination between the Ninth Battalion and the 8th Brigade beyond The Harp on April 9th, deserves record for the reason that the troops concerned belonged not only to different divisions and corps, but even to different armies. Equal or, perhaps, greater credit is due to the 13th Bn. 60th for the manner in which it had maintained touch with its neighbours on the left.

Further to the south the two battalions of the Royal Fusiliers and the 63rd Brigade had been hung up and a gap between the latter and the 111th Brigade had been partially bridged by the 6th Bn. Bedfordshire Regt., sent up by the 112th Brigade.

The two commanding officers made their way back to a half-company

of the 60th which was in support and it was ordered to move up at once in skirmishing order and form a defensive flank to the south. At 3.30 p.m. a runner came from the 60th to say that the enemy was in large numbers on the right flank and creeping up the road, some being within sixty yards of the position, and that the Lewis-gun which covered the right flank had been knocked out.

In consequence, orders were given to Captain Boyle to move up across the open in skirmishing order and to take up a position so as to cover the right flank of the 60th and command the cross-roads.

Captain Boyle moved up with "B" Company and some of "C" Company in skirmishing order, joining up with the right of the 60th and with his right shoulder back so as to command the cross-roads.

2nd-Lieutenant E. Boughton-Leigh was then ordered to move up and support Captain Boyle so as to extend the line to the right. The movement was well carried out with only one casualty and our protective flank ran for about one hundred and twenty yards from the right of the 60th, then ran south-west for four hundred yards.

This position was consolidated and served the purpose intended in covering the flank of the 60th and also commanding the cross-roads.

The Thirteenth Battalion had six Lewis-guns in the line. Battalion H.Q. was established in the Rœux-Gavrelle road.

During the day several ineffectual counter-attacks had been attempted by the enemy against the 63rd Division and the left of the 111th Brigade; these had all been stopped without difficulty by artillery and small arms fire.

During the early hours of the 24th, three of the reserve Lewis-guns (previously missing) returned to the Battalion, having been carried on with the 63rd Division in the attack on Gavrelle. These were sent up to secure the safety of the right flank of the 60th, taking up a position in shell-holes between the latter's right and our left. Later, two of the guns were sent up to the 60th to help them.

At 3 p.m., under an intense bombardment on Gavrelle, ending with forty minutes of gas shells, the enemy delivered a counter-attack on the "Drake" Battalion of the 63rd Division on the left. This battalion was established one hundred yards beyond the village and, as the wind was in the north-east, was not worried by the gas which was blown down the sunken road, compelling those at the Thirteenth Battalion H.Q. to wear gas-masks.

After the bombardment had lifted, the O.C. 60th was sure that he saw enemy moving in the village and across the ground due east of it. The position of Battalion H.Q. would have been rendered untenable had the

enemy got through the village, as he would have enfiladed the road. After a consultation between the two commanding officers, it was decided to form a defensive flank to the left, in case of attack from that direction ; and steps were taken by both battalions to effect this. A patrol was sent out to an isolated gun of the Machine-Gun Company which covered the ground east of Gavrelle promising support in case of attack. This machine-gun later did very good work, killing about forty of the enemy retiring after the counter-attack on the village had failed.

This failure was reported by patrols, which reported also that Gavrelle remained entirely in our hands. It was estimated that the 63rd Division killed two hundred of the enemy in front of our line and took about forty prisoners—the last line of the enemy advancing with their hands up.

During the night 24th/25th the Battalion was informed that the whole of the original objective had been taken and was ordered to extend its line to join up with the 13th Bn. Royal Fusiliers. The attack had, however, failed, so this order could not be obeyed.

Until the evening of the 26th there was heavy shelling of the front and back areas ; working and carrying parties laboured under great difficulties, many rations and water-cans being destroyed by shell-fire. During the night 25th/26th all our shell-holes were consolidated into a continuous line.

At 9 p.m. orders were received that the XVIIth Corps would attack on the morning of the 28th with the 37th Division on the left of the corps and the 111th Brigade on the left of the division with the 63rd and 112th Brigades on the right.

This formed part of a general attack by the Third and First Armies, ordered for the following reasons as recorded in Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch :—

" On the Aisne and in Champagne also, the French offensive had met with very obstinate resistance. . . . In order to assist our Allies, I arranged that until their object had been attained I would continue my operations at Arras . . . and preparations were undertaken for a repetition of my attacks . . . until such time as the results of the French offensive should have declared themselves."

The objective of the 111th Brigade was to be the Plouvain-Gavrelle road (the original objective of April 23rd). The Brigade was to attack on a two-battalion front with the 13th Bn. Royal Fusiliers on the right and the Thirteenth Battalion on the left, with the 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers in support. The frontage of attack was to be from fifty yards north of the cross-roads (previously mentioned in the account of April 23rd) to the right of the 60th on the Plouvain-Gavrelle road.

At 9.30 p.m. on the 27th the Commander of the 111th Brigade informed

Major Jackson that Major W. R. Stewart, M.C. (First Battalion), was on his way to take over command of the Battalion and at 10 p.m. Major Stewart arrived—the fifth Commanding Officer since April 23rd.

The day and night of the 27th were spent in preparation for the attack and at 11 p.m. the Battalion moved into a jumping-off trench two hundred yards nearer to the objective.

For April 28th, zero hour was 4.25 a.m. By about 7 a.m. the objective had been gained and at 9 a.m. Major Jackson, who had been sent up to obtain information, returned to Battalion H.Q. with the news that the Battalion was digging in and was in touch with the 9th Bn. North Staffordshire Regt., who had relieved the 13th Bn. 60th overnight.

On the right the situation was less clear: the right of the Battalion rested on the cross roads, but there was no sign of the 13th Bn. Royal Fusiliers, although there were men of different regiments further to the south. A Lewis-gun detachment was, therefore, posted to cover the right flank.

During the day the Battalion suffered from machine-gun fire from Greenland Hill and from a trench to the west of it. Several Germans were seen coming from the direction of Greenland Hill with the intention of surrendering, but were killed or wounded by their own men.

During the night there was very heavy artillery firing in the direction of Gavrelle and Oppy, further to the north.

The day of the 29th passed quietly, although the enemy was still giving trouble from Greenland Hill. Relief came that night but was somewhat delayed by heavy shelling round Battalion H.Q. and on the communication trench leading to the front line. Eventually, however, at about 1.30 a.m. on the 30th, the trenches had been handed over to portions of the King's Own Scottish Borderers and Scottish Rifles of the 9th Division, and the Battalion proceeded to St. Nicholas—just north of Arras.

On this day Lieut.-Colonel C. F. Pretor-Pinney, D.S.O., was buried at No. 30 Casualty Clearing Station at Aubigny.

Charles Frederick Pretor-Pinney was born in 1864 and went to Eton in 1878, where he was in Marindin's house.

He was in the Shooting VIII and shot for the Spencer Cup in 1880, becoming Captain of the VIII in 1882. From Trinity College, Cambridge, he entered the Army and joined the Rifle Brigade in November, 1884, on transfer as a lieutenant from the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

In January, 1898, he retired but, as a major in the Seventh (Militia) Battalion, he was attached to the Fourth Battalion for service in South Africa during 1901-02 and received the Queen's Medal with three clasps.

In October, 1914, he was gazetted to command of the Thirteenth Bat-

talion, consisting mostly of Londoners and Welsh miners, with a few regular Rifle Brigade serjeants.

An officer of his Battalion writes as follows :—

" After approximately a year's training in England under his guidance and discipline, this Battalion already showed signs of becoming one of the finest Service Battalions of the Army.

" In France, after serving in a quiet sector of the line, the Battalion was removed for a month to act as Show Battalion to the Third Army School at Auxile Chateau, and from there to the Somme, where on the night of July 10th, 1916, he was wounded in an attack on Pozières and was evacuated to England.

" The Battalion was devoted to its Colonel and, when he was fit again, all efforts were made to get him to return to France. He was not a young man, and he had earned his rest at home, but, as ever, duty was the first call to him ; ultimately he returned to take over command again, joining the Battalion at St. Pol.

" In January, 1917, he was awarded the D.S.O. and he was twice mentioned in despatches.

" A man of great personal courage and charm, a magnificent disciplinarian, a Rifleman in every thought and action ; he will always be remembered by those who served under him, as a very gallant officer and gentleman."

Casualties between April 20th and 30th amounted to two officers killed (2nd-Lieutenants G. B. Bagnall and A. I. Rae), two died of wounds (Lieut.-Colonel C. F. Pretor-Pinney and 2nd-Lieutenant W. L. T. Rhys) and six wounded (Major A. N. S. Jackson, Captain Hon. R. W. Morgan-Grenville and 2nd-Lieutenants F. C. Hall, J. W. Spanton, F. S. Lee and W. E. Hobday —the latter being " missing " also).

Among other ranks there were twenty-eight killed, two hundred and eleven wounded and nineteen missing.

The attack of May 3rd was of a similar nature to that of April 28th. In view of important operations which the French were to carry out on May 5th a considerable extension of the active front was arranged for and the Fifth Army, as well as the Third and First Armies, was to be employed.*

The Seventh,
Eighth and Ninth
Battalions.
Chérisy.
May 3rd, 1917.

† Out of a total front of sixteen miles this record is concerned only with those portions about Chérisy and Rœux, the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Battalions being engaged at the former place and the First Battalion at the latter.

* Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches.

† Map will be found on p. 59.

In preparation for the attack the 14th and 4th Divisions, on May 1st and 2nd, found themselves once more in the line: the 14th south of the River Cojeul between Wancourt and Vis-en-Artois, and the 4th north of the River Scarpe from Fampoux to the Hyderabad Redoubt.

On May 3rd the 14th Division attacked with two brigades—each with two battalions in front line. The 41st Brigade on the right had the Eighth Battalion on the right and the 8th Bn. 60th on the left; in the 42nd Brigade the 5th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and the Ninth Battalion occupied corresponding positions. On the right of the 14th Division was the 55th Brigade of the 18th Division and on its left the London Rifle Brigade—169th Brigade, 56th Division.

The Seventh Battalion was to support the attack when ordered.

Points of departure were, for the Eighth Battalion, from the front-line trench running north and south through a point some seven hundred and fifty yards north-west of Chérisy; for the Ninth Battalion from a taped line further north but five hundred yards nearer to the enemy lines.

Of objectives there were two:—First, a line running north-eastwards along the road from St. Michael's Statue for fifteen hundred yards to within two hundred yards of a wood known as Triangle Wood: thence northwards across the western face of that wood.

Second, a line running north and south one thousand yards east of St. Michael's Statue. This, for the Eighth Battalion, entailed crossing the River Sensée. Zero hour was 3.45 a.m.

Owing to its jumping-off place being nearer to the enemy, the Ninth Battalion was not to advance until eighteen minutes later.

At 2.45 a.m. the Battalion was disposed with "B" and "D" Companies—the latter on the right—in front line each in two waves: "C" Company was in support and "A" Company in reserve.

At 3.45 a.m. the assaulting companies moved forward in the dark. The barrage—which was excellent—showed up well, the flashes indicating the direction. The first obstacle, known as Narrow Trench and about five hundred yards from the start, was found to be lightly held.

At 4.20 a.m. "D" Company reported Chérisy on its right and at 4.35 that it had passed that village. At 5 a.m. the same company reported that the troops on the right were held up and that it was consolidating a position on the left of St. Michael's Statue (i.e. on the first objective). At 5.30 a.m. the left company—"B"—reported that it also was consolidating on the first objective but doubted being able to push on owing to machine-gun fire from the high ground on the left and left rear.

As the situation in Chérisy was uncertain a patrol was sent into the village and it reported the presence of some enemy dead but none alive.

At 6.40 a.m. "B" Company reported that it and "D" Company together with about a company of the East Surrey Regt. (18th Division) had crossed the River Sensée and were digging in about six hundred yards beyond St. Michael's Statue. "B" Company's left was in the air and it was suffering from heavy machine-gun fire—probably from Triangle Wood "C" Company was digging in near St. Michael's Statue.

For the next three or four hours the situation remained unaltered, two companies attempting to consolidate the line reached and one the first objective. Both positions were exposed to heavy machine-gun fire from the left and "C" Company was also being heavily shelled.

In fact an intensive bombardment was maintained by the enemy throughout the day upon the whole divisional area as far back as Brigade H.Q., the Seventh Battalion, as will be seen, suffering severely from its effects.

On receipt of a report from the O.C. Middlesex Regt. (on the right of the East Surrey Regt.) that there was a large gap east and south of Chérisy, "A" Company was ordered to be ready to form the inevitable defensive flank towards that village. At 11 a.m. orders were received from Brigade H.Q. for reinforcements to be sent up to the front line, but before "A" Company had moved off word was brought that men were falling back all along the line. The withdrawal appears to have begun to the right of the 14th Division and had the effect of leaving the right (the Eighth Battalion) in the air. This fact, combined with the appearance of a strong enemy force advancing from the direction of Vis-en-Artois, thus threatening to encircle the advanced companies from their left rear, and also an advance by the enemy from the front, led to a withdrawal of the line. The movement was carried out quietly; one attempt was made to stand in Narrow Trench, but eventually the whole line was back in its original trenches.

Contact was established here with the troops on either flank and active operations ceased.

Casualties had been heavy. 2nd-Lieutenants G. C. Dalgoutte and M. H. House were killed; P. H. Wooding and V. B. Nicol wounded, and W. H. Blades, H. B. Oakley and F. W. C. Reed wounded and missing. Among other ranks thirteen were killed, seventy-five wounded, twenty-one wounded and missing, and eighty missing. A total of seven officers and one hundred and eighty-nine other ranks.

At 1 a.m. on the 4th the Battalion was relieved by the 7th Bn. 60th, and moved to the neighbourhood of The Harp.

Before leaving the 41st Brigade it may be convenient to tell here how the Seventh Battalion fared this day, May 3rd. The Battalion was not called upon to take active part in the operations, its rôle being, as already stated, to support the attack when ordered. In its trenches, east of Wan-

court and south of the River Cojeul, it was subjected to a violent bombardment (already referred to in the Eighth Battalion account) and suffered severely. When the enemy counter-attack developed, resulting in the withdrawal of the leading battalions, it appeared to the Battalion that the objective of the enemy was Wancourt Tower, but the placing of our barrage first on our original first objective and then on the Zero lines foiled this attempt.

The Seventh Battalion lost two officers wounded—Captain R. C. Brown, M.C., and 2nd-Lieutenant B. Foster—twenty-six other ranks killed and thirty-six wounded.

The forming-up line and objectives of the Ninth Battalion have already been described.

At the appointed hour—4.03—May 3rd, companies were disposed as follows:—In the first wave “A” Company, with one platoon of “B” Company, were on the right and “C” Company with one platoon of “D” Company on the left. In the second wave were three platoons of “B” Company on the right and three of “D” Company on the left.

Battalion H.Q. was in a trench south of Guémappe and of the River Cojeul.

The attack started punctually, but from that moment no report was ever received from the companies in the first wave; communication after daylight was impossible and eight runners from these companies became casualties.

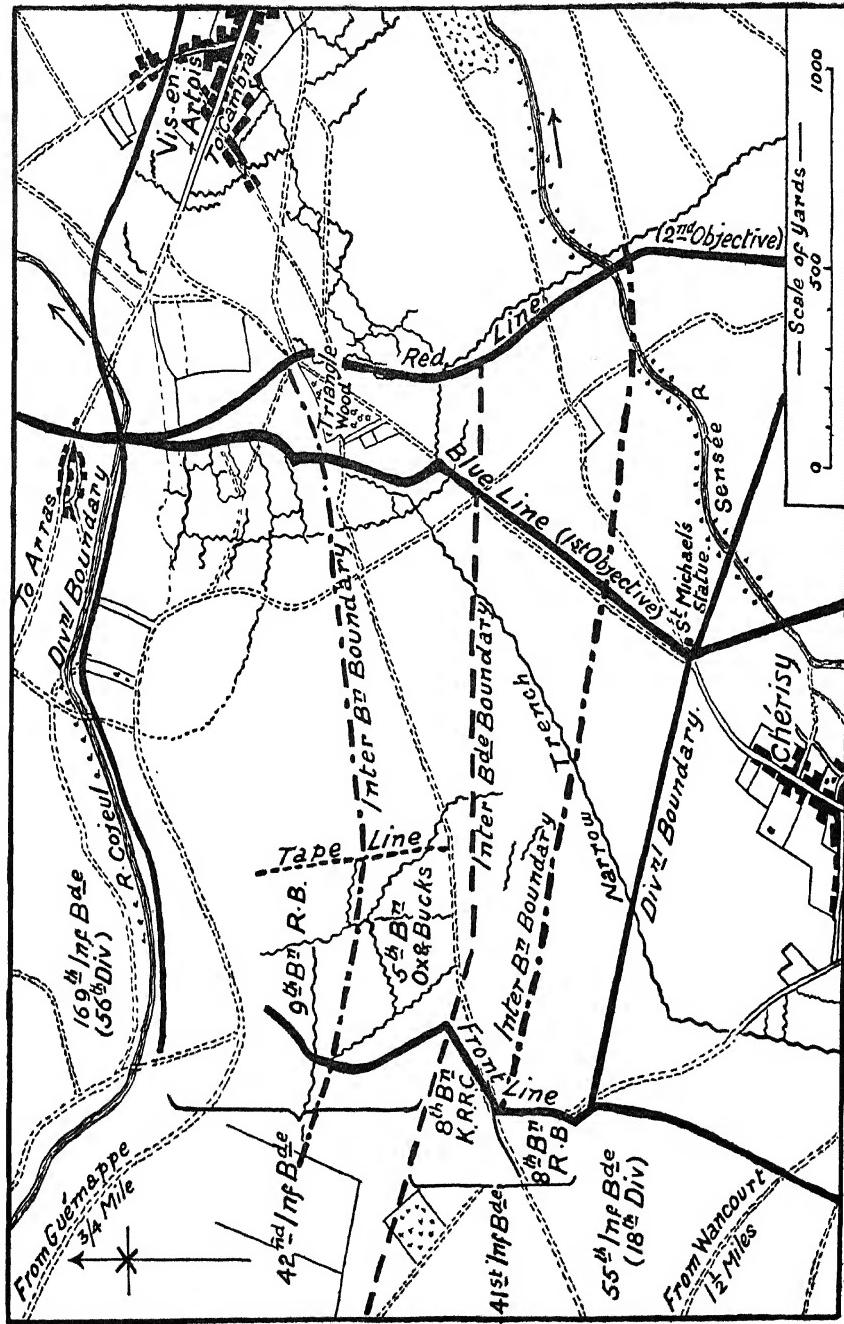
The right of the first wave evidently bore too much to the right and struck a new German trench which was wired and held by the enemy, but by 4.25 had passed beyond it, leaving some moppers-up. All the eight officers of the first wave appear to have become casualties very early in the day—some being wounded several times—yet, despite heavy losses from enfilade machine-gun fire, the line carried on, but few men, if any, ever reached the trenches which were their objective. Of N.C.O.s in the two leading companies only seven returned.

The second wave went over in line and kept its direction but, owing to the light then being better, came under machine-gun fire sooner than the first wave and also came upon machine-gun positions which had been established after the passage of the first wave, or missed by it in the dark.

This second wave was finally held up after advancing some five hundred yards and dug in in a line of shell-holes. As soon as the enemy discovered this the line was subjected to a bombardment by vane-bombs* and egg-bombs while machine-guns prevented any movement, the vane-bombs out-

* Vane-bombs were fitted with metal fins which acted like the feathers on an arrow.

THE BATTLES OF ARRAS.



THE ATTACK OF THE EIGHTH AND NINTH BATTALIONS ON CHÉRYY.

3rd May, 1917.

ranging the rifle-grenades with which it was sought to silence the machine-guns.

Thus the advance was hung up, machine-gun fire, which was continuous from both flanks, having proved the chief (and surely sufficient) obstruction.

The only messages received were from two detached platoons commanded by 2nd-Lieutenant Daubeny and Serjeant Everett respectively, who both stated that advance was impossible and asked if they were to withdraw at dusk. They also stated that it was apparent that the high ground on the left, north of the Arras-Cambrai road and the Cojeul, was not in our possession and that they could see our troops on the left hung up one thousand yards short of their first objective and that they themselves were in our own barrage. A sufficiently depressing situation. Incidentally previous instructions had been given to "D" Company to communicate hourly by Lucas lamp with the London Rifle Brigade at an arranged point. Communication was duly established at this point, but with the enemy, who was in occupation, not the L.R.B.

Later, orders were received to recall the Battalion, but these two platoons were the only ones with which it was possible to get touch.

About 9.30 p.m. news was received that one company was still out and holding a line of shell-holes and a strong point which it had made. Two patrols were sent to recall this company but they were unable to find it, though they came in contact with enemy posts and brought back six men of the Battalion from shell-holes.

That night as much of the Battalion as could be found came out of the line and moved back to trenches north of Wancourt. But next night—the 4th/5th—a message was received from 2nd-Lieutenant H. C. Round asking for S.A.A., rifle-grenades and water; this officer, with twelve men, had organized and held a strong point since 5.15 a.m. on the 3rd.* He and his party were recalled by the O.C. 5th Bn. King's Shropshire Light Infantry, who were then holding the line, but he refused to withdraw until parties had been sent out to bring in the wounded. Next night again Rifleman Atkins made his way back from a shell-hole where he had been guarding two wounded men, one of whom he brought back.

Casualties in the Ninth Battalion were:—Officers wounded—Captains A. D. McKinstry and C. F. C. Letts, Lieutenants J. P. Day, S. H. Russell, 2nd-Lieutenants W. L. Cooper, S. Bates, C. J. Dowson: wounded and missing, Lieutenant R. H. Plater, 2nd-Lieutenants G. E. A. Wade, A. J. Statham, W. H. Howatt and W. C. Wheatley, with two hundred and fifty-seven other rank casualties in killed, wounded and missing.

So ended a disastrous day. Justice demands that some mention be

* This gallant officer was unfortunately killed later in the year in August in the Salient.

made of the difficulties which confronted the troops assaulting, therefore reference is made here to the report rendered after the action by Brigadier-General Dudgeon, Commanding the 42nd Brigade.

"1. The failure of the attack by this Brigade," wrote General Dudgeon, "was chiefly due to heavy hostile machine-gun fire. . . .

"The hostile machine-guns were mostly occupying positions which should have been dealt with by the heavy artillery during the attack, but apparently were not.

"2. Our counter-battery work during the attack appeared to be very ineffective. The enemy kept up for fifteen hours the heaviest bombardment I have yet experienced and it consisted for the most part of 5.9's with some 8-inch.

"It would therefore appear that better value would be obtained by expending less ammunition on counter-battery work during the attack and devoting more to the bombardment of points as required by infantry brigades.

"This should not interfere with a heavy bombardment of all known occupied battery positions prior to Zero."

The report concludes:—

"The success of the attack made by the 14th Division on May 3rd depended more than usually is the case on the success of the divisions on the flanks. An advance along the top of Wancourt Ridge, such as had to be carried out by this brigade, swept as it was by machine-gun fire from the left flank . . . was bound to be very costly. Had it been successful the position in Triangle Wood would have been untenable unless the high ground north of the Cambrai road had also been captured. It would therefore seem that this was a case where a simultaneous advance all along the line was not advisable owing to the nature of the ground. Intelligent use of ground must be considered in such semi-open warfare.

"As soon as the high ground north of the Cambrai road had been captured the attack could have been made along the Wancourt Ridge with every chance of success.

"It is probable that by opening a heavy barrage of artillery and machine-guns at Zero (on the enemy's position south of the Cojeul and the Cambrai road) the enemy's attention during the early stages of the attack would have been drawn off the division on our left as much as it was by our actual infantry attack on May 3rd."

The remainder of the month was spent by the three Battalions in the 14th Division in and out of the line. On the 10th the Seventh Battalion suffered a heavy loss by the death from shell-fire of its Commanding Officer —Lieut.-Colonel V. A. Magawly Cerati de Calry, 6th Inniskilling Dragoons.

V. A. Magawly Cerati de Calry was born in 1882 and was educated at Harrow and Sandhurst. He joined the Northumberland Fusiliers in 1904, transferring to the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons in 1907, of which in due course he became adjutant. From India he went to France with his Regiment and on September 1st, 1916, whilst a captain in The Inniskillings, became T/Lieut.-Colonel in the Rifle Brigade in command of the Seventh Battalion, in which position he was awarded the D.S.O.

A brother-officer writes :—“ We were all very fond of him ; he was most desperately keen and conscientious and a real good sort.”

Altogether May can only be considered to have been a bad month.

During this month the 14th Division celebrated the second anniversary of its landing in France. The 42nd Brigade War Diary contains an interesting summary showing the numbers of casualties sustained in the brigade during these two years and their incidence among the different units of the brigade.

The equal distribution of casualties in the heavy losses suffered by the brigade is most remarkable, as also is the percentage of officers to other ranks—precisely the same as in the establishment of a battalion.

42ND INFANTRY BRIGADE
CASUALTIES—MAY 20TH, 1915—MAY 20TH, 1917

Unit.	Killed.		Wounded.		Missing.		Total.	
	Off.	O.Rs.	Off.	O.Rs.	Off.	O.Rs.	Off.	O.Rs.
5th Oxf. & Bucks L.I. . .	20	279	54	1,259	6	381	80	1,909
5th K.S.L.I.	27	293	47	1,411	2	200	76	1,904
9th K.R.R.C.	28	304	50	1,414	3	217	81	1,935
9th R.B.	20	286	50	1,446	5	364	75	2,096
42nd M.G. Coy.	—	13	7	107	1	5	8	125
42nd T.M. Batt.	2	4	—	19	—	1	2	24
Total	97	1,179	208	5,646	17	1,168	322	7,993

During the same period Honours and Awards gained by the Ninth Battalion were :—one D.S.O. (2nd-Lieutenant H. C. Round), eight Military Crosses, fourteen D.C.M.s, twenty-six M.M.s and seventeen “Mentions” in Despatches.

For these operations Lieut.-Colonel Fellowes was ordered to remain with the Details out of the line and the command devolved upon Major H. S. C. Peyton.

The First
Battalion. Rœux.
May 4th-12th,
1917.

On May 3rd the XVIIth Corps attacked with the 4th Division on the right, the 9th Division on the left, and the 17th Division in reserve. In the 4th Division the 10th Brigade was on the right and the 12th Brigade on the left. The 11th Brigade was in reserve, but the First Battalion was placed at the call of the 12th Brigade. The first objective of the division was the northern portion of the village of Rœux (including the Chemical Works and Station buildings).

This part of Rœux consists of a number of well-built houses lying on either side of the Rœux-Gavrelle road. The principal of these buildings is the Chateau which has very thick stone walls and extensive cellars. East of the buildings lie two large factories and a quarry in which dug-outs had been constructed by the Germans. Between the Chateau and Rœux proper there are a number of houses joining up the Cemetery to Rœux. Subsequently it was found that the Chateau was connected with Rœux by a tunnel.

Zero hour was originally fixed at 4.5 a.m., but on the afternoon of May 2nd it was altered to 3.45 a.m., thus converting a daylight attack into a night operation.

The Battalion remained during the day in the old German Fourth System (the Green Line of April 9th), moving in the evening to Cordite Trench situated south of the Arras-Douai railway and some five hundred yards west of the Rœux-Gavrelle road.

The attack of the 4th Division was a failure, as was also that of the 9th Division.

Although the First Battalion was not involved it was soon to feel the effects of this non-success, so the remarks of the G.O.C., 4th Division, may not be out of place. He ascribes the failure to the following causes :—

- (1) Inadequate preliminary bombardment.
- (2) Distance and number of objectives in view of the number of troops available. (There were three objectives.)
- (3) Attempt to execute a night attack on a large scale without sufficient previous warning to enable necessary precautions to be taken.
- (4) The pace of the barrage which was calculated for a daylight operation and was too fast for a night operation.
- (5) Failure of "moppers up" to carry out their task in the darkness.

In order to clear up the situation and to extricate any surviving men in the Rœux Chateau or beyond it, orders were issued by the XVIIth Corps that an attack with all available troops was to be made after dark. This attack was entrusted to Brig.-General Carton de Wiart, V.C., Commanding 12th Brigade, who decided that no artillery preparation was possible on account of uncertainty as to the position of our own men.

May 4th. As part of the above plan, "A" and "C" Companies were ordered to assault the Chateau with the sword without artillery assistance. The assault was attempted at 3 a.m. in the face of heavy machine-gun fire, but nothing was accomplished and "C" Company lost two officers wounded, Captain I. C. Montford and 2nd-Lieutenant B. J. Cunningham, with forty other rank casualties.*

In the evening the Battalion was moved to trenches north of the railway, the movement taking place without incident.

May 5th. All this day the Station buildings north of the railway were bombarded by our heavy artillery, troops being withdrawn outside the five hundred yards danger-zone. At 9.30 p.m., a bombing-attack was made by "I" Company to reconnoitre the buildings north of the railway.

The buildings were found to be strongly held, and the reconnaissance withdrew with a loss of twenty-one casualties. The 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. on a similar errand south of the railway was no more successful.

On the 6th, after preparation with field guns and light howitzers, "I" Company, at 5.30 p.m., made another effort to occupy the buildings north of the railway. As soon as it entered the buildings from the north heavy machine-gun fire and sniping compelled it to re-occupy its original line, having suffered a further twenty-seven casualties.

On the 7th, the Battalion was relieved and went into trenches in the old German fourth system, where it remained till the night of the 10th.

Casualties so far were two officers and ninety-four other ranks.

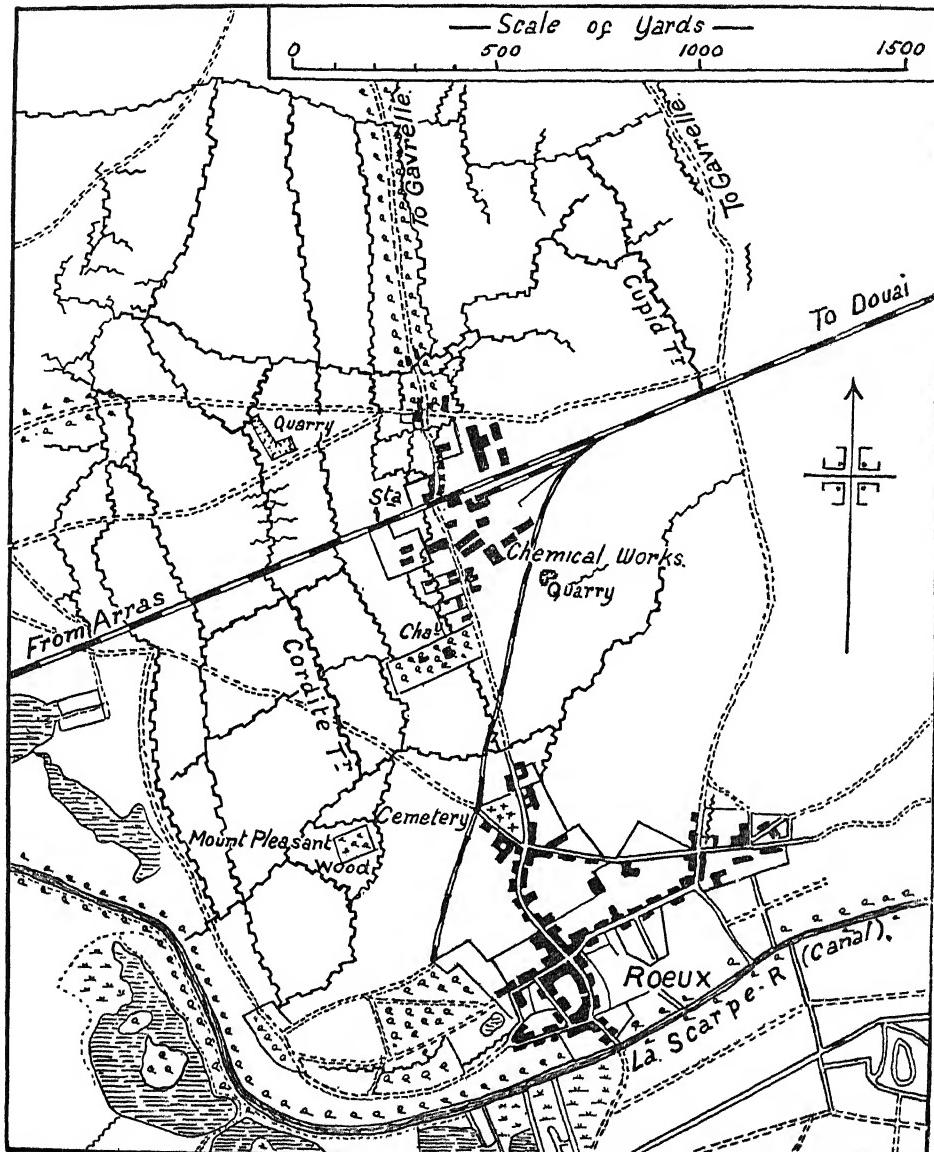
The next attack was to take place on May 11th. On the night of the 10th, the Battalion moved up into assembly trenches north of the railway and about three hundred yards west of the Rœux-Gavrelle road. On its right was the 1st Bn. East Lancashire Regt., and on the left the 6th Bn. Dorsetshire Regt. of the 50th Brigade, 17th Division. "A" and "C" Companies were in front line with "I" in support.† Battalion H.Q. was in a quarry which it shared with H.Q. of the Dorsetshire.

Zero hour was fixed for 7.30 p.m. on the 11th. Some natural anxiety

* Major Peyton's orders for this attack are dated May 4th and were written the day before the operation took place. The date is obviously wrong as it is contradicted in the Battalion, 11th Brigade and 4th Division War Diaries.

† During all operations since May 3rd "B" Company was employed as Carrying Company.

THE BATTLES OF ARRAS.



ACTIONS OF THE FIRST BATTALION AT ROEUX.

4th-12th May, 1917.

had been felt at keeping the assaulting troops for sixteen hours of daylight in their assembly trenches, but special arrangements were made, both in the trenches and in the air above them, to obviate the risk of detection. In any event, be the reason what it may, the enemy failed to observe the presence of the troops, or, at any rate, paid them no attention.

During this day our heavy artillery kept up a slow bombardment: the afternoon was still and hot and, at 7.30 p.m., the sun was shining straight in the eyes of the enemy when the barrage opened. The latter is described as having been "almost perfect" and the infantry were able to get out of their trenches with practically no loss.

The assault was completely successful and the objective, the buildings north of the railway, captured: about forty prisoners were taken and at least an equal number of the enemy was killed in and about the buildings. Three machine-guns and three trench-mortars were also taken by the Battalion. During the night there was heavy shell-fire which brought the total casualties up to five officers and seventy-five other ranks, of which, happily, the great majority were wounded.

At 6.30 a.m. on the 12th, "A" and "C" Companies attacked the next objective, which was a trench known as Cupid Trench five hundred yards further east. The 1st Bn. Somerset Light Infantry was attacking also on the right, south of the railway, and the 7th Bn. Yorkshire Regt. on the left. The trench was successfully taken and consolidated, but unfortunately the troops on the left had not been able to capture the whole of their objective.

During the day, "A" and "C" Companies were subjected to a very heavy bombardment and suffered over thirty casualties. Towards evening the two companies were withdrawn and were eventually relieved at midnight by the 8th Bn. Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

The Battalion then withdrew to the neighbourhood of Athies and on the 13th went into billets in Arras for two nights. It then proceeded by omnibus to Buneville, seventeen miles west of Arras.

Casualties in the Battalion since May 3rd were, in addition to the two officers already mentioned, 2nd-Lieutenants L. L. Green (acting adjutant), N. Williamson, E. F. H. Smith, A. L. Nobbs, J. S. Tidball and W. L. Anthony wounded: twenty-three other ranks killed, one hundred and sixty-six wounded and nine missing—a total of eight officers and one hundred and ninety-eight other ranks out of an attacking strength, on May 3rd, of twelve officers and four hundred and ten other ranks.

Before leaving the subject of the First Battalion in its final attacks at the Battles of Arras, a few extracts are appended—taken once more from Lieutenant J. A. Davison's private account.

After the attack of May 3rd, the situation in front was most obscure,

so Lieutenant Green went forward to reconnoitre and, after getting in touch with the commanding officers of several battalions, contrived to get back a remarkable report. For this he was rewarded with a bullet in the mouth and, later, the award of the Military Cross.

During the unsuccessful bombing attack of "I" Company on May 5th, as the party was withdrawing, A/Corporal Williams sat down on the road and took pot-shots at the Boches. For this he was subsequently awarded the Military Medal.

On the same occasion 2nd-Lieutenant Anthony, who speaks fluent German, was stunned by a bomb. "When he came to he heard a Boche machine-gun firing from near by. This eventually stopped and two Boches came out and saw him; they came up to him, kicked him, and said: 'All right. Don't bother about him, the swine's dead.' Eventually he managed to crawl in."

During the attack on May 11th, the capture of prisoners and material were made by the mopping-up party under Serjeant Cooke, who was for this awarded the Military Medal.

On this day also—"As Bland was going forward a Boche officer came up to him holding his hands up and just before he reached him he threw an egg-bomb at Bland's party.

"Bland shot him with his revolver, and to make quite sure the man behind him put another bullet into him, and a third, not wishing to be outdone, ran him through with his sword."

During this period, Battalion H.Q. occupied three different "quarters." One, the quarry already mentioned, was "full of Boche dead which were green and blowing bubbles on account of the heat."

A second was under the single arch of a bridge in the railway embankment. The arch measured thirty-five feet by twenty-five and contained three battalion headquarters, one carrier company, half a pioneer company, and two regimental aid posts.

A 5.9 shell burst on the wings of the arch, killing two officers and "about" thirty men.

The Battalion's own "aid post" was in "the Estaminet house in Fampoux where lorries continued to wait although chunks of the house were being blown away. Pascall (our faithful M.O.) did wonderfully well again."

In the Commander-in-Chief's Despatch of April 9th, Lieut.-Colonel Fellowes, 2nd-Lieutenant Lole and Serjeant Mann had received "Mentions," while for the April operations Colonel Fellowes received the D.S.O., Lieutenant Davison the M.C., Serjeant J. Searle and Rifleman F. Greenwood the D.C.M., and Serjeant Stanford, Corporal Locke and Riflemen Dumbrill and Walker the Military Medal.

For the May operations the Military Medal was awarded to Corporal H. West and Rifleman C. Gold in addition to Serjeant Cooke and A/Corporal Williams already noticed. Not, it may be considered, a distribution erring on the side of generosity.

The Third Battalion. Before concluding the story of the five Battalions of the Regiment which took part in the Battles of Arras some mention must be made of the Third Battalion and of how the repercussions of the First Battle affected it.

Last heard of out training at Annezin, the Battalion during the first week in March moved into divisional reserve at Fosse 10 and thence on March 9th to trenches in the Angres sector some one thousand yards west of that village, which is the south-western suburb of Liévin—a mining town rather more than a mile west by south of Lens. The point of the Vimy Ridge, near Givenchy-en-Gohelle, which was to mark the northernmost limit of the First Army's attack on April 9th, was two miles to the south and on the far side of the Carency River. Here the Battalion remained until April 13th carrying out the usual round of front-line, brigade support in Bully-Grenay, and divisional reserve at Fosse 10. Life was not altogether uneventful as there were occasional heavy bombardments by both sides with or without raids and counter-raids.

One of the former caused the Battalion to be moved from Bully-Grenay and split up in various directions. In raiding activity the Battalion (as also its old allies the 8th Bn. The Buffs) gave considerably more than it received. On the evening of March 25th, the enemy put down a heavy box-barrage of all calibres, but the ensuing infantry attack was completely stopped by the Lewis-gun fire of the Battalion which opened the moment the barrage lifted. For this work the Battalion received the congratulations of the Brigade and Divisional Commanders.

On the other hand, several good fighting patrols were carried out, notably one of six other ranks under Lieutenant Hopwood, which caused casualties to the enemy and secured valuable information.

These patrols were ordered by Corps H.Q. and subordinate commanders were allowed no discretion. On one occasion a patrol, out in brilliant moonlight, was followed by enemy Verey lights whenever it moved : one light fell between the legs of the patrol leader and there burnt itself out. Immunity from casualties could only be ascribed to forbearance on the part of the enemy.

Not until April 13th were to be felt the effects of the great attack further south.

Liévin.
April 13th-15th, On this day, April 13th, the Battalion was in process
1917. of relieving, in the Angres sector, the 1st Bn. Royal
Marine Light Infantry—part of the 188th Brigade, 63rd
(R.N.) Division, under the orders of the 1st Corps and attached to the
17th Brigade.

During the relief, according to the Third Battalion War Diary, it was disclosed that the Germans were retiring and the Marine Light Infantry, accompanied by "D" Company, went over the top.

The night of the 13th/14th was spent in straightening out the confusion which had occurred owing to the advance having started in the middle of a relief.

On the morning of the 14th, the Battalion received orders to take Liévin together with the Crook and Crazy Redoubts about five hundred yards on the eastern side of the town and just north of the Liévin-Lens road, and to consolidate on that line, pushing forward patrols to keep contact with the enemy.

"B" Company was ordered to advance with three platoons in line, each platoon finding its own point. "A" and "C" Companies were in support on the right and left respectively and "D" Company in reserve; advance to commence at 10 a.m.

Liévin was taken without opposition but, on emerging into the open, the leading men came under rifle fire from Crook and Crazy Redoubts and also from the flanks owing to the Battalion at this time having got rather ahead of the advancing troops (on either flank?). Crook (the northerly redoubt of the two) was very quickly taken by means of covering fire from Lewis-guns placed in houses slightly on the flanks, without a single casualty being incurred, and by 3 p.m. the Battalion was in possession of the whole of its objectives and had only had about three casualties.

On the 15th, "D" Company, who had not come into action on the 14th, was sent through with orders to get in touch with the enemy and, if possible, get possession of the enemy's position running along the western edge of Lens. This company very soon met with heavy opposition and took up positions running along a line about eight hundred yards east of the Crook-Crazy line.

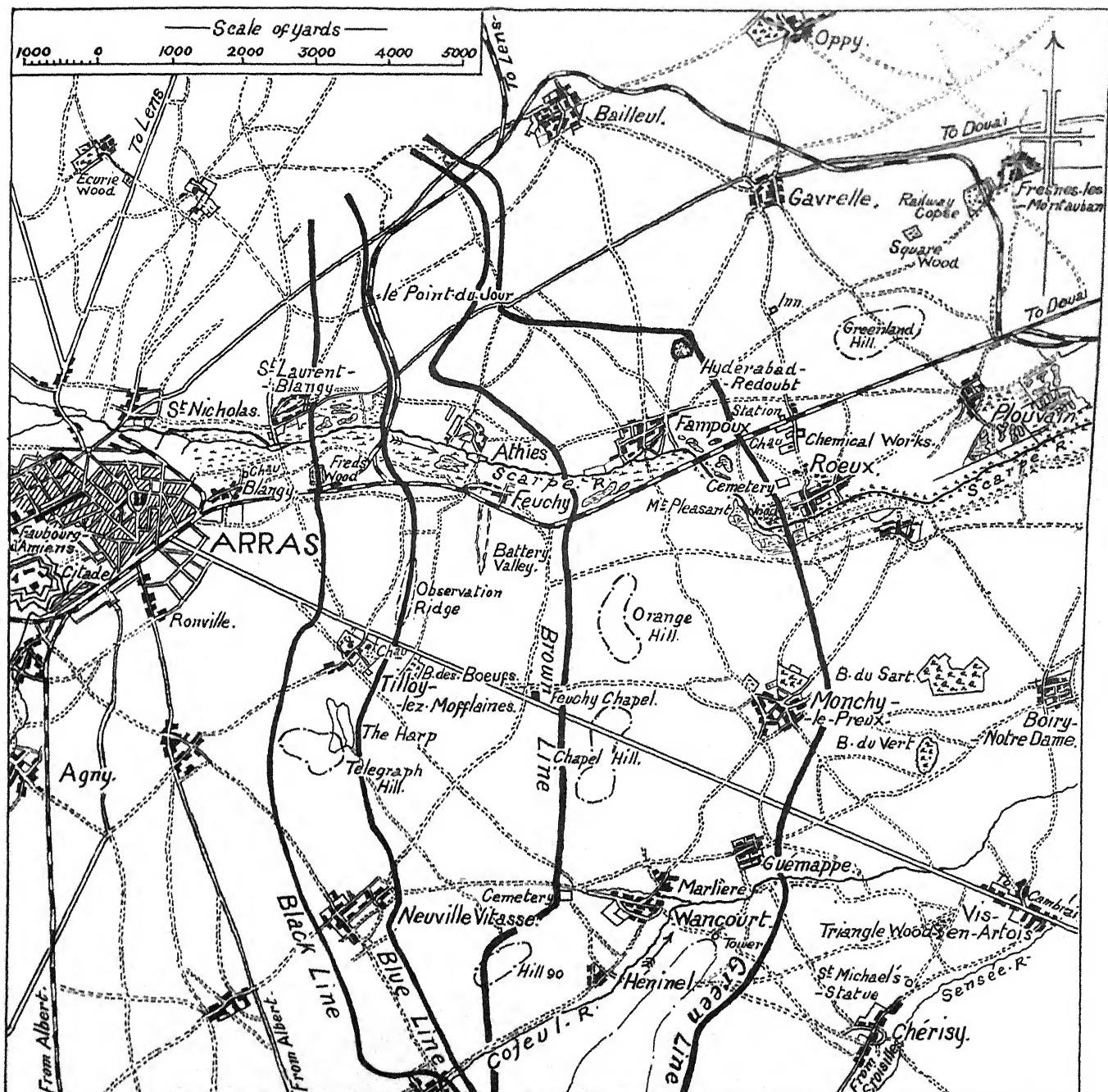
On the night of the 15th/16th the Battalion was relieved by the 8th Bn. The Buffs without any change in the general situation having taken place, and went into brigade support in Liévin, where it remained until the night of the 18th/19th, when it was relieved by the 7th Bn. South Staffordshire Regt. and went into billets in Bully-Grenay.

Total casualties were two officers and five other ranks killed, twenty-seven other ranks wounded and eleven missing.

So far as the Regiment was concerned, the heavy and continuous fighting which characterized the Battles of Arras lasted from April 9th to May 12th, but for all the troops engaged a halt was soon to be called on this sector while final preparations were made for the first great event of the Summer Campaign.

THE BATTLES OF ARRAS.

1917.



THE FIRST, SEVENTH, EIGHTH, NINTH AND THIRTEENTH BATTALIONS.

9th April-12th May, 1917.

CHAPTER III

THE SUMMER CAMPAIGN.

THE ATTACK ON THE MESSINES-WYTSCHAETE RIDGE.

IT will be recalled that it was the intention of Sir Douglas Haig to transfer his main offensive to another part of the front after the objectives of the Spring Campaign had been secured and that the front selected for these further operations was in Flanders. It will also be recalled that in the description of the characteristics of the country, which comprises the Ypres Salient, reference is made to :—

“ A flat country of rivers, dykes and canals, the dead level of which is broken by the line of hills stretching from Wytschaete north-eastwards to Passchendaele and Staden ” (Chapter II).

It was the southern extremity of this line of hills which had been selected for the next great attack—known, and to become famous as—the Messines—Wytschaete Ridge.

* “ The group of hills known as the Messines—Wytschaete Ridge lies about midway between the towns of Armentières and Ypres.

“ Situated at the eastern end of the range of abrupt, isolated hills which divides the valleys of the River Lys and the River Yser, it links up that range with the line of rising ground which from Wytschaete stretches north-eastwards to the Ypres—Menin road, and then northwards past Passchendaele to Staden.

“ The village of Messines, situated on the southern spur of the ridge, commands a wide view of the valley of the Lys, and enfiladed the British lines to the south.

“ North-west of Messines the village of Wytschaete, situated at the point of the salient and on the highest part of the ridge, from its height of about two hundred and sixty feet commands even more completely the town of Ypres and the whole of the old British positions in the Ypres Salient.

“ The German front line skirted the western foot of the ridge in a deep curve from the River Lys opposite Frelinghien to a point just short of the Menin Road. . . . The enemy’s second-line system followed the crest of the Messines—Wytschaete Ridge, forming an inner curve.

* Sir Douglas Haig’s Despatch.

"In addition to these defences of the ridge itself, two chord positions had been constructed across the base of the salient from south to north. The first lay slightly to the east of the hamlet of Oosttaverne, and was known as the Oosttaverne Line. The second chord position, known as the Warneton Line, crossed the Lys at Warneton, and ran roughly parallel to the Oosttaverne Line a little more than a mile to the east of it. . . .

"The actual front selected for attack extended from a point opposite St. Yves to Mount Sorrel inclusive, a distance following the curve of the salient of between nine and ten miles. Our final objective was the Oosttaverne Line which lay between these two points."

As was only natural, the attack had been entrusted to General Sir Herbert Plumer and his Second Army, which, since its formation as an army, had been guarding the Ypres Salient.

The Third Battalion only of the Regiment—the Third—was engaged in the Battle, the 24th Division forming part of the Xth Corps.

June 7th, 1917. In the Second Army were, from right to left, the IIInd A.N.Z.A.C., the IXth and the Xth Corps. The latter consisted of the 41st, 47th, 23rd, and 24th Divisions, of which the three former were to attack in front line, while the latter was in corps reserve. For the purposes of this account it will be sufficient to record, very shortly, the objectives of the Xth Corps. There were two objectives:—the first—known as the Black Line—which ran from the junction with the IXth Corps at the northern end of Oosttaverne Wood, thence through Denys Wood and Ravine Wood, and thence in a general north-easterly direction; the second objective—known as the Green Line—ran from the corps boundary five hundred yards north-east of Oosttaverne in a general northerly direction, east of Bug Wood and Rose Wood, until it joined the Black Line some one thousand yards west of Hollebeke.

The Black Line was to be the objective of the three leading divisions which were to attack at zero hour—3.10 a.m.

The capture of the Green Line was to be the task of the 24th Division, which would attack at a second zero hour, to be notified later, with the 17th Brigade on the right and the 73rd Brigade on the left.

At 3.10 a.m., June 7th, the nineteen mines on the army front were exploded and the attack began. The Third Battalion had little immediate concern with this as it was well behind the line, and, in fact, being encouraged to rest as much as possible in preparation for its exertions later in the day.

The general plan for the two attacking brigades was that, after moving up gradually to the old British front line, they should move to the assault without any check on the Black Line. In the 17th Brigade the Third Battalion (on the right) would have the 1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers on its left and the 33rd Brigade, 11th Division, IXth Corps, on its right.

In the event of the latter brigade being held up the Battalion was to capture Oosttaverne (in the IXth Corps area) and form a defensive flank to the right.

The following account of the day's events is taken from the official report rendered after the action by Lieut.-Colonel R. Pigot, D.S.O., M.C., the Commanding Officer at the time.

The story begins on June 6th, when, at 11.0 p.m., the Battalion left its camp near Reninghelst and marched to trenches in the G.H.Q. line.

"The noise of our guns all night made sleep out of the question for most people, but complete silence had been enforced in camp on the evening of the 6th from 6.0 p.m. till 10.0 p.m., which allowed the men a bit of rest. From zero hour onwards sleep was impossible for most people, though a certain number of the men slept well till 11.50 a.m., when we got orders to start.

"12.35 p.m., June 7th. The Battalion jumped off in artillery formation following the line of red flags laid out: these flags were a great convenience. A halt of twenty minutes was made about Old British Front Line when touch was gained with the 1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers on our left. From here Oosttaverne Wood and Denys Wood were plainly visible and, thanks to the model at Reninghelst which all N.C.O.s had seen, there was no fear of losing direction.

"At Old British Front Line I left Captain Boscawen in charge to bring the Battalion on and went on myself with the F.O.O. to reconnoitre Black Line and find out situation in Oosttaverne Wood.

"2.50 p.m. The Battalion arrived at Black Line still in artillery formation, as it was not in enemy's view from anywhere. The situation was exactly according to the scheme on Black Line and it was only necessary to inform company commanders of this fact and to point out a few landmarks in front to give them their direction and they were ready to start.

"3.0 p.m. The two leading companies deployed and advanced from Black Line to get under the barrage which had started slowly at about 2.57 p.m. and became really heavy at about 3.5 p.m.

"The barrage was quite perfect and the men were all delighted with it. Many of them say they were getting the dust in their faces, and the line of dust and smoke certainly appeared to me to be absolutely regular. From later accounts, officers of the leading company say they were fifty

to eighty yards from the barrage, varying according to the slight irregularity of the barrage itself.

"The leading company shot a few Germans as they came up to them, but the majority were taken prisoners as they surrendered so willingly.

"On arrival at the Green Line the leading company went on with the barrage, and say that they got up to the houses about five hundred yards beyond, which were then unoccupied, but finding no one on their flanks and realizing that they had gone too far, they came back to the proper Green Line. I think this is possible as Captain Boscowen saw them coming back to the Green Line from in advance of it.

"We undoubtedly had a great chance here of putting a lot of guns out of action by going on a few hundred yards further to about the line of Green Wood and then retiring again to Green Line, but the difficulty on these occasions of making out the situation accurately, particularly with regard to the troops on the right and left and even one's own exact position, makes it nearly always impossible.

"Still, I think that more attention should be paid to possibilities such as the above after reaching an objective. At present we send out patrols as soon as the barrage has finished and take advantage of any small bits of commanding ground to our front. Perhaps it would be better for the barrage to lift and finish at once on reaching the objective and for the heavies to be definitely 'off' for some distance to our front, so as to allow the commander on the spot a really clear field, to take advantage of a situation such as this. It seems that these sort of situations will be more common in the future now that we often get on top of the enemy's guns. It would make more of a certainty of it if the barrage went on creeping, say, for one thousand yards in front, so that we could advance under it the whole way.

"From the German activity afterwards, I am certain they were taking away a lot of guns from the line north and south of Green Wood. . . .

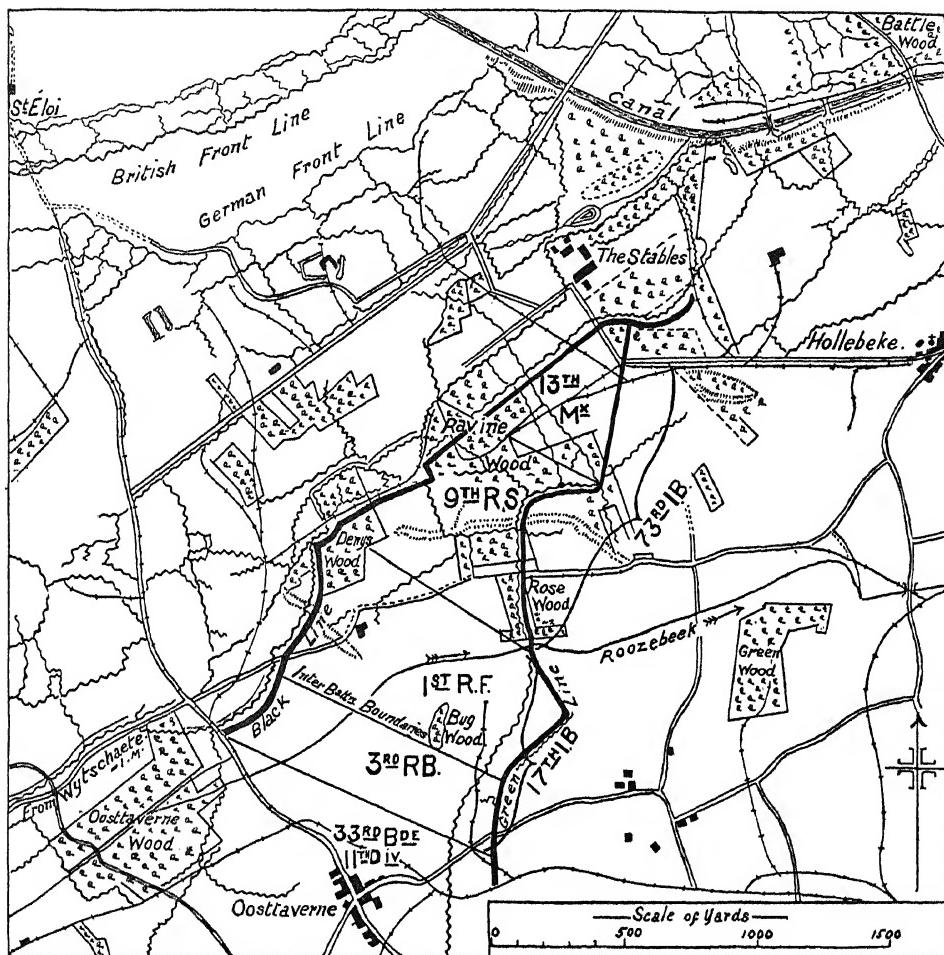
"Patrols went forward from the Green Line under the barrage up to the houses (previously mentioned) but could not get into the houses owing to the barrage. There was no resistance offered anywhere. My casualties up to date were one officer and one rifleman wounded by our own barrage.

"I then sent forward my carrying-party: the officer in charge, Lieutenant A. R. Buxton, was killed and three men wounded by snipers in the houses. During the attack the Germans did not shell my attacking companies or my head quarters at all, but they were putting a certain number behind the Black Line. . . .

"4.0 p.m. (about). Germans started shelling round my head quarters and on Black Line and Oosttaverne Wood but only lightly with 77's. They

THE BATTLE OF MESSINES.

7th-14th June, 1917.



THE THIRD BATTALION.

7th-9th June, 1917.

went on doing this all the evening but did practically no damage. Up to midnight my casualties totalled forty-seven, but the majority were caused by one of our own heavies which was firing short. This howitzer also caused the Battalion on my right a good many casualties.

"Tanks. Two came across my front, from south of Oosttaverne Wood going towards Bug Wood, after the Green Line had been taken. I had nothing for them to do so did not talk to them. They appeared to be acting on the proper scheme but there was nothing for them to do. After having a look round they went home by the way they had come up. Had I been held up they would have been most useful and it seems that some tanks could conveniently be allotted to battalion commanders, and more or less accompany them during the advance. At any rate they should keep in close touch with battalion commanders."

The account closes with a reference to the S.O.S. signal.

"S.O.S. Signal," says Colonel Pigot, "was abused by everyone, myself included.

"In the heat of the moment one is inclined to ask for S.O.S. knowing that it means instant safety to one's front line. But unless it is properly used it leads to great confusion."

So wonderful was the organization for this "perfect battle" that one company claimed to have received its letters twenty minutes after reaching its objective.

On this day the Third Battalion captured four 77 m.m. guns and three machine-guns with, as prisoners, one officer and some fifty others.

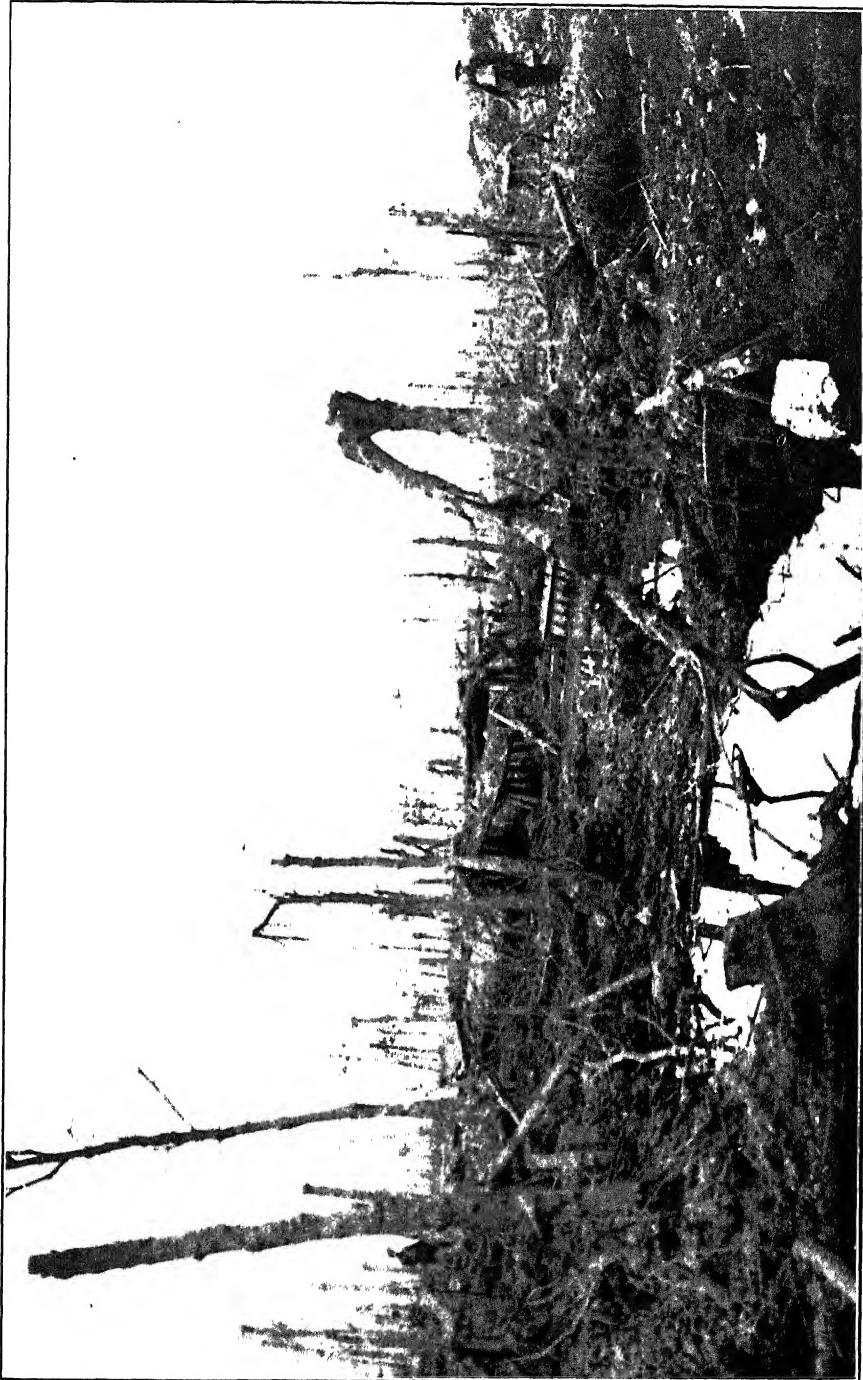
On June 8th the Battalion was in the same position holding a one-company front. On this day patrols captured three prisoners and killed some twenty Germans.

On the night 8th/9th the Battalion extended to its left and took over the front from one company of the 1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers. At this time trouble was experienced from enfilade artillery fire coming from the north of the Salient about the Pilckem Ridge. There was difficulty in dealing with this fire partly owing to the fact that it came from opposite the front of the VIIIth Corps—the next corps but one.

On the night of the 9th/10th the Battalion was relieved by the 8th Bn. The Buffs and, after a pause in the Black Line, moved back to Micmac Camp near Reninghelst.

Casualties since the beginning of the action on June 7th amounted to Lieutenant A. R. Buxton and sixteen other ranks killed, Captain R. C. Bridgeman, 2nd-Lieutenant C. E. Goody and sixty-seven other ranks wounded, and two missing.

On the 10th, Captain R. C. Bridgeman was awarded the Military Cross;



MESSINES RIDGE.

12th June, 1917.

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No. Z/2690 A/Corporal C. Manning the D.C.M., and No. Z/2511 Rifleman J. Gregg the Military Medal.

After forty-eight hours spent resting and re-organizing, the Battalion on the 12th returned to the line, taking over trenches in Battle Wood about three hundred yards back from the south-east face of the wood and with its left about the Ypres-Comines railway. It was understood that the battalions on the flanks would establish posts on the Spoil Bank and on the railway.

At 5.0 a.m. on the 13th the situation was found to be as follows. In front line were "D" Company on the right and "B" on the left: "A" Company was in support five hundred yards back in the wood and "C" in reserve in the old German front line. The 12th Bn. Royal Fusiliers was in position on the left and the 18th Bn. London Regiment was holding the Triangular Spoil Bank.

The Battalion also had a small post with a Lewis-gun on the Spoil Bank, but the expected posts on the flanks had not materialized.

In order to clear up the situation a patrol was sent forward; it came under machine-gun fire both from the Spoil Bank and from the railway embankment along the east edge of the wood, but reached its objective, and a wounded corporal who managed to get back said that the Spoil Bank appeared to be occupied both by the enemy and ourselves. The enemy was now very much on the alert and it was impossible to reinforce the forward posts or to get them back to the main position, and it was not until after dark that they were ordered to be withdrawn.

All this had been preliminary to an attack to be carried out by the 17th Brigade to capture that portion of the objective of June 7th which had not been taken by other divisions. The Battalion was not employed in the front line of the attack and, on the night of the 13th/14th, it was withdrawn; two companies being in support to the 8th Bn. The Buffs, in front line, and the remainder in reserve where "A" Company had spent the previous twenty-four hours.

At 7.30 p.m., June 14th, the attack took place and was completely successful. The Battalion was not called upon except that "A" Company was moved to the Triangular Spoil Bank in order to keep in touch with the situation. During that night the Battalion was heavily shelled but suffered few casualties, and the next day at 12 noon it was ordered to return to camp without relief. Four men, whom it had been impossible to withdraw on the night 13th/14th, were out in shell-holes in front of Battle Wood during our creeping barrage on the evening of the 14th and were not touched.

The casualties for this period were two other ranks killed, twenty-seven

wounded and two missing, to which must be added 2nd-Lieutenant E. G. Kemp and Captain G. F. Fawn, R.A.M.C., the M.O., who were both wounded on the way out but remained at duty.

The Battalion remained in Micmac Camp until the 19th. On the 17th the G.O.C. 24th Division, Major-General L. J. Bols, inspected the Battalion and complimented all ranks on the result of the attack on June 7th.

On the 19th the Battalion moved to trenches in the Hill 60 sector, where the 17th Brigade relieved the 72nd, having its right on the Klein Zillebeke road. During its tour here the line and all approaches were heavily and consistently shelled, chiefly from the north and north-east; the enemy had perfect ground observation and supplemented this by a lavish use of aircraft, his machines flying low over our lines and seven or eight balloons being in the air.

On the 23rd, having had four other ranks killed, twenty-one wounded and two missing, the Battalion was relieved and moved to camp on the road near Dickebusch. Here, next day, the camp was shelled with high-velocity guns and the Battalion was ordered to move to Micmac Camp.

For the remainder of the month the whole Battalion was employed under the A.D. Signals, Xth Corps, burying cables in the forward area.

On the 25th, whilst thus employed, it lost one other rank killed; 2nd-Lieutenant P. E. V. Goodson and twenty-three other ranks wounded.

On June 23rd Lieut.-Colonel R. Pigot proceeded on leave; he was retained in England for duty and on the 27th Major E. R. Kewley succeeded to the command.

On the 29th the remainder of the 17th Brigade moved back to the Second Army Training Area, leaving the Third Battalion to a few more days of burying cables before it, too, was taken out and, moving by train from Reninghelst to Desvres (about nine miles from Boulogne), went into rest billets at Cremarest. Here it carried out training in preparation for the next great step in the operations, a special model of the ground to be attacked being laid out by the C.O., now Lieut.-Colonel Kewley.

Whilst in this camp Brigade sports were held and also Battalion shooting competitions; there are no details as to what happened in the former but in the latter it is recorded that Rifleman F. Pearson won the Young Soldiers' prize and R.S.-M. W. Pelling that for Regular Soldiers. There was also a cross-country race, which was easily won by Serjeant H. Dalton.

On July 17th the Battalion began its move towards the line and eventually, on the 25th, arrived at Micmac Camp, from which place it was to move into the battle.

The Battalion was now in the IIInd Corps commanded by Lieut.-General Sir Claud Jacob.

The Sixteenth Battalion. Before leaving the north to return to the four Battalions in the south it may be convenient to record here the doings of the other Battalion in the Ypres area, the Sixteenth Battalion, last heard of at the end of February in the Infantry Barracks, Ypres.

March, for the Sixteenth Battalion, was a quiet month spent in the usual round of trenches in the Zillebeke sector and training in camp, interspersed with periodical working parties when in Ypres in divisional reserve. During the month the Battalion was inspected by the Army Commander, General Sir Herbert Plumer.

In April the Battalion came out of the line for a while, moving on the 11th to Brandhoek and on the 14th by rail to Millain, some seven miles north of St. Omer. There for a fortnight it was engaged in training and had its first opportunity of adopting the new formations which some battalions had had in force since January. The result was inspected by General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston, Commanding the VIIIth Corps, to which the Battalion now belonged.

On the 28th the Battalion moved to a camp north-east of Poperinghe, where training, varied by work on railway construction—chiefly the latter—continued into the next month until May 15th. On this date the Battalion moved into the line as Right Support Battalion, Hill Top sector, north-east of Ypres, moving up to the front line on the 23rd. During this tour two new offensive trenches were dug and wired by the units of the 117th Brigade. These trenches were in advance of the Battalion's front and connected up with Wielte on the right, and the construction of each necessitated what was in fact a minor operation requiring much care and good staff work.

On the 31st the Battalion was relieved; H.Q. and two companies moving to camp near Poperinghe, while the remaining two were sent to Ypres for more work on railway construction, which continued until June 6th. Employment on this work produced a certain number of casualties daily, including 2nd-Lieutenant R. H. Membrey wounded "at duty." On the 6th Lieut.-Colonel H. C. Bridges, North Staffordshire Regt., rejoined the Battalion and assumed command vice Lieut.-Colonel E. N. Snepp, who went to command the 11th Bn. Royal Sussex Regt.

From June 14th to the end of the month the Battalion was in the Lancashire Farm sector; shelling was heavy and there was a daily toll of casualties, including 2nd-Lieutenant R. H. Membrey, who was again wounded and once more "at duty."

On the 30th the Battalion was relieved and next day went by rail and march route to the Serques area, north-west of St. Omer, for training.

Here for the present the Sixteenth Battalion will be left to itself to enjoy a rest which certainly had been earned.

THE BATTALIONS IN THE SOUTH.

And now it is time to return to the Battalions in the south where they were left on April 5th. These Battalions, it will be recalled, were the Second, Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth.

Although officially the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line ended on April 5th, there was still some more fighting in prospect for those battalions which were engaged in following up the enemy.

The Second Battalion. * After the action of April 4th/5th the Second Battalion
Gonnelieu. was withdrawn and occupied in resting, with occasional
April 21st, 1917. road-making, until the 18th, when it moved into the
Colonel Brand had gone to a Fourth Army conference, leaving Major G. M. A.
Ellis in command.

At 12.15 a.m. on April 19th an attempt was made to occupy the village of Gonnelieu with patrols. To effect this the 2nd Bn. Lincolnshire Regt. was ordered to send patrols into the village itself whilst the Second Battalion conformed on the left, keeping in touch also with the 19th Bn. Royal Welsh Fusiliers, 40th Division, which was on the Battalion's left. The Lincolns' patrols without encountering opposition found gaps in the enemy wire and their supporting companies moved up. Thereupon heavy enemy machine-gun fire was opened and they withdrew, having had some thirty casualties. The Second Battalion, likewise its neighbours on the left, withdrew conformably.

It was evident that Gonnelieu was held in strength and that more strenuous measures than patrol work would be required to evict the enemy.

Accordingly an attack on the village was arranged to take place on April 21st in conjunction with an attack by the 40th Division on the left.

The general scheme of the attack was that two companies of the 2nd Bn. Lincolnshire Regt. should attack the centre of the village, having as their objective its eastern exit. On the capture of this objective the remainder of the Lincolns would capture the rest of the village and, as a signal that this had been effected, white Verey lights would be fired.

Upon seeing these lights, or upon receipt of other information that the village had been taken, the Second Battalion would move forward and occupy, on the left of the Lincolns, its allotted portion of the final objective.

This latter was a line about two hundred yards beyond the village and running roughly from east-south-east to west-north-west. The Lincolns

* Map will be found facing p. 22.

were to occupy their portion as soon as they had taken the village and the junction between them and the Battalion was a track running north-eastwards from Gonnelleieu : thence the line to be occupied by the Battalion ran for eight hundred yards as far as the Gouzeaucourt-Cambrai road, where would be the 119th Brigade, 40th Division.

During the advance of the Lincolns the Battalion was to cover their left flank with fire ; similarly, when the Battalion advanced, the Lincolns would perform a like service for its right flank.

Major Ellis' orders were as follows :—

One hour before zero (4.20 a.m.), April 21st, the Battle Patrol Platoon would take up a position south of the Gouzeaucourt-Gonnelleieu road and eight hundred yards west of the latter village. About two hundred yards in front of the platoon the two leading companies, "A" and "D," would be extended with their left near the Cambrai road and right some eight hundred yards to the south-east : "B" Company would be protecting the left flank about the Cambrai road and "C" Company in support.

As soon as the advance was ordered the Battle Patrol Platoon, moving in four patrols, would move through the companies on a front from the Gouzeaucourt-Gonnelleieu to the Cambrai roads supported by "A" and "D" Companies. On the occupation of the objective "C" Company would move forward and dig a support line.

At 4.40 a.m. no Verey lights had been seen nor other information received but, ten minutes later, it was stated that the lights had been seen.

At 5.10 a.m. it was reported that the leading companies were on their way but suffering casualties from hostile artillery whilst the Battle Patrol Platoon was hung up by machine-gun and rifle fire from a trench running north and south from beyond the Cambrai road. Major Ellis, realizing the futility of continuing a frontal attack, ordered the Battle Patrol Platoon to make every effort to gain a footing in the village and the left attacking company to attack the hostile trench from both flanks ; he also ordered the right company to enter the village and take the enemy in reverse and enfilade.

These operations were so successful that the enemy, almost surrounded, surrendered, forty-six prisoners and two machine-guns being taken. The capture of this trench enabled the Battle Patrol Platoon to enter the village from the north and to clear the north-west end of it.

The objective having been reached and consolidation in progress under heavy shell-fire the Battle Patrol Platoon was withdrawn, bringing with it six prisoners taken in the street-fighting in Gonnelleieu and pleasant recollections of a good day, the success of which was largely due to its own exertions.

Casualties, considering the nature of the operations, were not heavy. 2nd-Lieutenant A. L. Holland and twelve other ranks were, unfortunately, killed, and Major Ellis, Captain S. A. Hadland, 2nd-Lieutenants A. G. Throssell, F. L. Bell and forty-five other ranks were wounded.

It would have been too much to hope that Major Ellis should escape the day ; the magnetic attraction of his person for enemy projectiles had led to contact with a shell which wounded him very severely whilst on his way forward to see the progress of his companies.

Command devolved upon Captain Hon. E. Coke, M.C. That night the Battalion was relieved and went into support in which, with one tour in the outpost line, it continued until the end of the month. On the 27th Colonel Brand returned and resumed command.

The beginning of May found the Battalion doing some training and working on the Fins-Gouzeaucourt light railway. The G.O.C. XVth Corps (General Sir John du Cane) inspected the Battalion and presented medal ribbons to the following :—2nd-Lieutenant J. H. Bowler—Military Cross. Serjeants A. Cross and H. Souster—Distinguished Conduct Medal. A/Corporal E. Phillips—Military Medal.

The Divisional Commander congratulated all ranks of the Battalion on their smart turn-out and soldier-like bearing. 2nd-Lieutenant G. H. Southall was, the next day, awarded the Military Cross for gallantry and devotion to duty. On the 9th the Battalion went into the outpost line east of Villers Guislain for an uneventful tour of three days.

This, had it but known it, was to be its last visit to the front line for over two months. On May 12th it went into brigade reserve and thence on the 14th to corps reserve at Nurlu, six miles north-east of Péronne. There, and at Aizecourt-le-Haut, near by, it remained until June 1st, carrying out some good training, holding sports, building a 30-yards range and re-fitting with “clothing and necessaries.” No doubt that golden treasure-house—Captain Alldridge’s stores—produced everything that was wanted, even to black buttons. These, practically unobtainable from Ordnance, were supplied regularly from India by the Regiment’s old friend and contractor, Mahomed Ismail. During this period the ribbon of the D.C.M. was presented to C.S.-M. F. Birtwistle.

It will be remembered that the attack on the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge was now imminent.

For the attack the 8th Division was transferred from the XVth to the XIVth Corps which was in army reserve.

Thus it was that on June 3rd the Battalion at last left the south and the Somme area, in which it had spent more than a year, and moved by

rail from Heilly to Caestre, marching thence to billets in Rouge Croix, a mile or so away.

As is well known, the attack of June 7th was entirely successful and the 8th Division was not called upon. As a consequence the Second Battalion took no part in the battle but remained training at Rouge Croix.

There it may well be left for the present, returning to the three battalions of the 20th Division still in the south.

The Tenth,
Eleventh and
Twelfth Battalions.
Operations in the
South.
April, 1917.

After their successful action at Metz-en-Couture on April 4th/5th the Tenth and Eleventh Battalions were relieved and had a few days' rest and training at Barastre and Bus respectively. The remainder of the month was uneventful for both Battalions. On April 8th Brig.-

General Browne-Clayton gave a complimentary address and on the 13th the Tenth Battalion moved into the line on the left of the brigade sector. The line of resistance was held by two companies with one company in front watching Havrincourt Wood, the Battalion's left resting on the Canal du Nord. On the 18th the line was advanced without opposition to about four hundred yards inside the wood and the Eleventh Battalion moved up and took over the main line of resistance from the reserve companies of the Tenth and the two 60th Battalions.

On the 25th both Battalions came out and went, the one to Bertincourt, the other back to Bus.

Meanwhile on April 5th the Twelfth Battalion moved from Bus to Ytres to make room for the Eleventh Battalion. These two villages were in much the same condition, but the enemy had not had time to wreck them completely; quantities of explosives were lying about and the walls of those houses still standing had been prepared for demolition.

After a couple of nights of working parties the Battalion went into the outpost line between Havrincourt Wood and Ruyaulcourt with its right some seven hundred yards from the south-west corner of the wood and its left midway between the two. On the 8th an advance of about one thousand yards was made, patrols moving forward at 11.0 p.m., and the right of the new line was now in the wood. Next day, the 9th, there were several encounters with enemy patrols which invariably retired after an exchange of shots. Captain W. C. Messenger and 2nd-Lieutenants J. L. Rapoport and M. S. Munro all had interesting little fights, but unfortunately 2nd-Lieutenant R. E. Verneude was mortally wounded by machine-gun fire and Serjeant Adamson killed by rifle fire at close range, directed at Captain

Messenger's party. The latter party killed two Germans, whose bodies were afterwards found.

Captain F. E. Spurling, on his way to one of his posts in the wood, met a German on a ride. The latter put up his hands and a Rifleman shouted "Hallo ! It's a Fritz !" Five Germans who had been lying behind a fallen tree then opened fire upon the party, but fortunately no one was hit, although the range was no more than twelve yards. The fire was returned, but the result is not known.

On the 12th there was a further move forward of the picquet line and next day the 60th Brigade was relieved and the Twelfth Battalion returned to Bus. Until the 19th the Battalion was occupied in finding official working-parties and, unofficially, in improving its accommodation. It then returned to the line which had now advanced through the wood to the further edge. The line held by the Battalion had its right on the Metz-Trescault road just outside the wood and its left one thousand yards to the north-west, the line running along a ride through the wood.

The next day, April 20th, the Brigade Commander visited the Battalion and decided that Battalion H.Q. must move out of Metz into Havrincourt Wood ; the construction of new gun positions, it was thought, would lead to the shelling of Metz. Accordingly at 12 noon next day the move was carried out and from 2 to 2.30 p.m. the new H.Q. was shelled ! The same night the picquet line was again advanced so that the line then ran from the cross-roads south of Trescault in a westerly direction into the wood.

On the 22nd an attack was staged in which the Battalion's part was the capture of the northern part of Trescault. Two platoons of "A" Company were employed and reached their objective. A number of the enemy, estimated at one hundred, was seen retiring on the left in an easterly direction but, owing to the advance of the battalion on the left, it was impossible to open fire and the enemy escaped.

On the 24th the 40th Division on the right attacked Beaucamp and Villers Plouich but was unable to retain the former, largely owing to machine-gun fire from Bilhem Farm. Accordingly, it was decided to capture the latter and for this the 12th Bn. 60th was employed, the Battalion co-operating on the left and finally joining up with the 60th at Trescault Cemetery ; the operation was successful and the new line consolidated.

During the next few days there were various readjustments of the line, and on the night of the 29th/30th the whole brigade was employed in wiring the front and the next night a continuous trench was dug along the whole front behind the wire.

"It is quite evident," says the Battalion Diary, "that the line we are

holding now is going to become a proper system of trenches with communication trenches. The Hindenburg Line is only a few thousand yards away now and the place would be quite a good position except that Havrincourt village looks right down into our positions."

During the month casualties were light but, in addition to 2nd-Lieutenant Vernerde, 2nd-Lieutenant Munro was killed on the 24th, whilst on the same day Captain Spurling was badly wounded by a shell which hit "B" Company H.Q. without, however, touching 2nd-Lieutenant Whyte who was with him.

On the 27th Lieut.-Colonel H. L. Riley returned and assumed command.

The 20th Division remained in the same area during the first half of May and there is little to record. The Diary of the Eleventh Battalion refers to its tour in the line as "exceptionally quiet," a description which applies to the tours of the other two Battalions. The Eleventh Battalion records on the 3rd the following immediate awards:—D.S.O.: Captain Hon. A. M. Bertie; M.C.: Captain H. M. Stephenson; R.A.M.C. (att.): Captain H. A. Slade; D.C.M.: No. 1657 C.S.-M. W. Pargeter.

On May 22nd the relief of the 20th Division by the 42nd began and it moved to another sector further north. Marching by Beaulencourt and Favreuil (north of Bapaume), the Division, on the 24th and 25th, relieved troops of the 1st A.N.Z.A.C. in the Quéant Sector.

The 59th Brigade on the right relieved the 8th Australian Brigade and the 60th Brigade on the left the 14th Australian Brigade, the dividing-line between them running through a point about a mile west of Quéant. The left of the sector was in the Hindenburg Line and there had been repeated counter-attacks on it since its capture by the A.N.Z.A.C. The remainder of the line was said to be comparatively quiet.

The Tenth Battalion went into the line south of Lagnicourt on May 24th and became the right battalion of the division.

There is little to record of this tour except that one unlucky trench mortar bomb caused five casualties in a returning patrol. On the 28th the Battalion was relieved and moved back to an old trench near Vaulx-Vraucourt, where next day it pitched itself a camp.

The Eleventh Battalion on the 24th took its place on the left of the Tenth. The line consisted of a number of isolated posts, not all occupied, and no movement was possible by day. On the 28th it returned to camp at Favreuil.

To the Twelfth Battalion, as the left Battalion of the division, fell on the 25th the duty of taking over trenches which had formerly been the Hindenburg support line. This is described as being "absolutely smashed

up and in a filthy condition and is the nearest resemblance to the trenches at Courcelles that we have had."

After an uneventful tour the Battalion returned to billets in Vraucourt, where it remained cleaning up and resting until the 31st, when it went into support at Noreuil.

For the first few days of June the Tenth Battalion continued training in Vaulx-Vraucourt. "The whole of this rest," says the War Diary, "was conspicuous for the most delightful weather. Sports, probably the most enjoyable the Battalion has had for a long period, were carried on every evening and sometimes in the afternoon as well. The final of the inter-company football championship was won by 'C' Company, the winning goal being scored in the last five minutes. A new feature in the sports was Græco-Roman wrestling introduced by Rfn. Golisky, a Russian serving with the Battalion."

On June 5th, the 59th Brigade relieved the 60th Brigade in the left sector and the Tenth Battalion went into the left battalion sector in the Hindenburg Line, formerly occupied by the Twelfth.

The Battalion remained in the sector, in support, or in the right battalion sector until June 21st, when it was relieved and went back to Favreuil. There is little of interest to record for this period except for annoyance from trench mortars and the carrying of gas cylinders into the line; these were successfully projected immediately after the relief of the Battalion.

During the month was announced the award of the D.C.M. to No. S/13778 Rifleman J. Cook of "B" Company for gallantry in front of Les Bœufs.

The Eleventh Battalion spent this time in much the same way. Sports were held at Favreuil with the 10th Bn. 60th. In these the Battalion won seven out of the eleven events, including the tug-of-war, but the 60th won an inter-battalion football match. A boxing competition was also held. Besides tours in the trenches much work was done in and behind the lines and salving carried out, the Battalion collecting fifty-two rifles. Orders were received to train an "officer's party" for a raid and this was done under 2nd-Lieutenant Davies; the raid does not appear to have been carried out. On June 25th the Battalion marched to Gomiecourt. During this month mention is made by the Eleventh Battalion of the Tenth Battalion's Band.

The Twelfth Battalion on June 2nd moved into what the War Diary unconventionally calls "identically the same places as last time." It then

continued with the usual routine of trenches, support and, of course, work. Whilst in the Lagnicourt sector "Chinese Attacks" * were carried out on the 15th and 16th. These were to assist an attack north-west of Bullecourt, some six miles away to the north, undertaken by other troops. "The enemy," says the Diary, "seems very perturbed up there, sending up quantities of every coloured lights : little notice is taken of our bold effort down here." Football, cricket and sports took place while out of the line and there was an exciting sports meeting with the 12th Bn. 60th in which the Battalion more than held its own. On the 10th there was an inconvenient thunderstorm which, besides causing the usual discomfort, transferred the dye from the-camouflaged tents to officers' and men's clothing.

In Favreuil village the division had constructed a little rifle range which was available in the evenings for private practice. The Divisional Concert Party—"The Verey Lights"—was also in full swing, so everybody was able to have a good time."

During the month a very successful Brigade Horse Show was held near Favreuil.

Eventually, after a few days spent at Vaulx-Vraucourt and again at Favreuil, the Battalion on June 26th marched to camp near Achiet-le-Grand.

These last movements of the three Battalions were preliminary to the transfer of the 20th Division from the line to the Third Army Training Area, this army being now under General Hon. Sir Julian Byng, who on June 12th had succeeded General Sir Edmund Allenby.

On June 29th the Tenth and Eleventh Battalions moved by rail from Achiet-le-Grand to Candas ($4\frac{1}{2}$ miles south-west of Doullens) and thence by road to Berneuil (3 miles) and Pernois ($4\frac{1}{2}$ miles) respectively. Before following them on the next day the Twelfth Battalion, "as the Battalion is not likely to be in this part again," erected a cross, made by the pioneers, bearing the following inscription :—

"In Memory of the Officers, N.C.O.s and Riflemen of the 12th (S.) Battalion Rifle Brigade who fell in action near Gueudecourt, on October 7th, 1916."

This was taken across to the very spot where the Battalion had attacked.

It will be recalled that this action was the successful attack on Rainbow and Cloudy Trenches in which the Battalion lost five officers killed and three wounded with two hundred and twenty-three casualties amongst the other ranks.[†]

* A "Chinese Attack" consisted of the opening of fire upon the enemy by all weapons but without any actual infantry advance.

[†] Volume I, pp. 215-218.

On arriving at Candas the Battalion marched two miles to Bonneville.

The 20th Division was now assembled in the Canaples area and settled down to training and a well-earned rest.

Leaving it thus engaged, attention may now be turned to the five Battalions left in the Arras area.

THE ARRAS GROUP.

The First Battalion. Of the five Battalions in the Arras area the First Battalion was destined to remain there for some four more months.

The Battalion, which went to Buneville on May 14th, was left there until June 11th. Steady training was carried out, varied by occasional inspections by the Divisional Commander (Major-General Hon. W. Lambton) and one by the Army Commander. On June 11th the Battalion moved by bus to Arras and stayed the night in the Cathedral Deaf and Dumb School area. There were a few casualties from shell-fire—an early reminder that the period of rest was over. Next day saw a move into brigade reserve in Stirling Camp, situated alongside the Arras-Lens railway embankment north of the River Scarpe. Here it remained in reserve, combining training with working-parties until the 18th, when it moved into the line south of the Scarpe. On the evening of the 15th the camp had been shelled, 2nd-Lieutenant Hon. D. E. F. O'Brien being wounded (at duty) and five other ranks killed and ten wounded.

The new line was south-west of Rœux and the battalion on the left, the 1st Bn. East Lancashire Regt., was on the other side of the Scarpe.

On June 23rd what is referred to as a raid was carried out by "B" Company. As a fact it was more an attack than a raid as it was intended to consolidate and hold the trench after capture. The trench in question was immediately south of the River Scarpe and was known as Devil's Trench.

The plan was that "B" Company, accompanied by one platoon of the 3/4th Bn. The Queen's Regiment (a company of this battalion was attached to the Battalion at this time for instruction), should advance at 10.20 p.m. under a barrage of artillery, machine and Lewis-guns, and capture the trench which was about one hundred and twenty yards distant from our front line.

A covering party would remain out during consolidation, a party of forty men would construct and occupy a post on the extreme left and a communication trench would be dug connecting with the front line.

Captain T. W. Carlyle was in command. All went according to plan;

the trench was captured—there was a little difficulty with the enemy wire but this was soon overcome—the covering party was out and the communication trench well under way. One German officer and six men were taken prisoner and a number of casualties inflicted both in dug-outs in the trench and in the open beyond where “heaps of dead” were seen.

Then, to quote from the Battalion account, “very nearly half an hour after the work of consolidation had started the unexpected happened.” For some reason, which has never been explained, the order to retire was given by the officer in charge of the consolidation: the order was carried out and the covering party had, perforce, to conform.

About thirty casualties were suffered but no details are available. The 4th Division account of the action states that “Captain Carlyle handled his company with ability and discretion.”

On the 25th the Battalion on relief returned to Stirling Camp. Next day it moved by march route to Y Huts on the Arras-St. Pol road where, on the 26th, it had the honour of being inspected by the Colonel-in-Chief, Field-Marshal H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught. The parade strength for the inspection was twenty-five officers and five hundred and thirty-six other ranks.

During the month Sergeant H. Cummins was awarded the D.C.M. Casualties amounted to twelve killed, fifty-one wounded and seven missing.

On the 29th the Battalion moved to Barossa Camp, north of St. Laurent-Blangy, the 11th Brigade being in divisional reserve. After a fortnight of training it returned on June 13th to the trenches south of the Scarpe and, after an uneventful tour, on the 22nd went into brigade support in trenches east of Feuchy. On the 30th it was back in Barossa Camp, where it will be left for the present.

Casualties during July were two other ranks killed and 2nd-Lieutenant C. H. Evans and seventeen other ranks wounded.

Next of the Arras Group may be taken the three Battalions in the 14th Division.

May, it will be remembered, could only be classified as “a bad month,” but now happier days lay ahead—for a while at any rate.

The Seventh and Eighth Battalions began the month with an easy time, mostly training or in support, but the Ninth Battalion had one more bad tour, losing Lieutenant L. Davies killed and having a certain number of other casualties. During this tour of ten days the 42nd Brigade lost ten

The Seventh,
Eighth and Ninth
Battalions.

officers and one hundred and seventy other ranks : "almost as heavy as in the old days in Ypres salient in 1915," says the Brigade Diary.

The 14th Division, however, was to be relieved and given a whole month for training and recreation. It may be imagined what this meant to officers and men after more than two years spent at Ypres and Arras with but one change of scenery—and that on the Somme !

Moreover the month was to be spent in pleasant surroundings on the open downland south of the valley of the little River Authie and within reasonable distance, for some people, of Amiens.

The Ninth Battalion was the first to move and left Beaurains on June 9th, the other two Battalions following on the 11th and being caught in a heavy thunderstorm on that day. Otherwise the three days' march was uneventful except that the marches were hot and some of them long. In the Ninth Battalion's orders for the march the advanced party's method of locomotion is laid down with great exactitude.

"2nd-Lieutenant Hatch will ride a horse. C.Q.M. Serjeants will ride bicycles."

This was considered of such importance that the order was repeated verbatim the next day.

Eventually the three Battalions came to rest—the Seventh and Eighth at Bertrancourt, the Ninth at Beauquesne, the original H.Q. of the Third Army and Advanced G.H.Q. for the Battle of the Somme.

The division settled down to steady training and competitions of all sorts were held, both military and athletic.

But the most important happening for the Seventh and Eighth Battalions was not until the last day of June, when they were inspected by H.R.H. The Colonel-in-Chief. Through the greatest misfortune the weather was at its worst and the inspection took place in pouring rain. There were on parade—Seventh Battalion, twenty-four officers and six hundred and fifty other ranks—Eighth Battalion, twenty-six officers and an un-recorded number of other ranks : the paper strength on this day was nine hundred and six.

Previous to this, on June 19th, the Seventh Battalion had had the privilege of finding a guard-of-honour (2nd-Lieutenant G. D. Harle and fifty-one other ranks) for H.R.H. at Saulty.

In all the different activities, divisional and brigade, the three Battalions more than held their own.

Though not necessarily more successful than the other two Battalions, the Ninth Battalion has left more explicit records of its prowess : amongst its victories in the 42nd Brigade were the Transport, Bombing and Rifle

Shooting Competitions, and, in the Boxing Tournament, Corporal Jackson and Rifleman Sheppard each endured the honour of a "Best Loser's" prize.

There was also a Divisional Horse Show which was a great success although no Battalion makes an extravagant claim on the prize list.

So life went on, and if there is little to record it is because the 14th Division, like the country which has no history, was happy.

During this period, in the Eighth Battalion, one Military Cross and three D.C.M.s were awarded.

The 14th Division moves North. After just a month the 14th Division moved north. On July 10th the Seventh and Eighth Battalions left Bertrancourt and marched to Beauval and Terramesnil, respectively. In the 41st Brigade orders for this march all units are warned to be clear of a certain cross-roads by 10.0 a.m. for the significant reason that "a column of artillery five miles long is marching northwards."

On July 12th the two Battalions entrained at Doullens for Godewaersvelde and marched to camp near Berthen; on the same day the Ninth Battalion entrained at Candas for Bailleul and went into camp, north of that town, where it remained carrying out further training until the end of the month.

The Seventh Battalion was similarly occupied except that one company at a time was employed at work on the Kemmel defences; on the 30th it moved to another camp—known as Frontier Camp.

The Eighth Battalion found two companies for work at Kemmel, the remainder continuing training. The working companies had one unlucky day, three other ranks being killed and 2nd-Lieutenant E. R. Dyer and five other ranks being wounded by shell-fire.

During this period officers of all three Battalions reconnoitred a portion of the front line.

The 14th Division now formed part of the IXth Corps, Second Army, and on July 31st its units were under orders to move at one hour's notice.

And there for the present it may be convenient to leave them.

The Thirteenth Battalion. There remain to chronicle the doings of the Thirteenth Battalion since April 30th. From May 1st to the 17th the Battalion remained at Villers-Sir-Simon carrying out training and indulging in various forms of sport and games. The Battalion football competition was won by "D" Company.

By the 20th the Battalion was in the reserve trenches east of Tilloy-lez-Mofflaines, where it remained, training and finding working-parties, until

May 28th, when it took over the left sub-sector of the Monchy-Guémappé front. The Diary says of this front, "an interesting condition of warfare was found to exist there, the enemy having no definite line or system of trenches, seeming to favour a system of organized shell-holes, making him difficult to detect, and presenting an ill-defined target for artillery."

Enemy snipers had been allowed to get the upper hand but this was soon altered.

On May 30th the Commanding Officer was asked if the Battalion could carry out a demonstration in conjunction with an attack to be made that night by the 29th Division on the left. Colonel Stewart agreed and the operation was entrusted to "C" Company.

The object of the operation was the capture and consolidation of some cross-roads in front of the Battalion's line.

The attack was to be carried out under a barrage of artillery, machine-guns and Stokes mortars, and would move in three lines, the first and third each about twenty strong and the second consisting of two Lewis-guns. 2nd-Lieutenant W. M. Smith was in command and 2nd-Lieutenant F. B. Johnson was lent from "A" Company. Zero hour was 11.30 p.m. From dusk until 11.15 p.m. hostile artillery was as usual, but from that time it increased and was directed on our front and support trenches. Five minutes before zero the first line left the trenches and lay down in the open and at zero it advanced, followed by the second and third lines. Before it had gone fifty yards the enemy opened heavy artillery and machine-gun fire and fifty yards from the objective the advance was held up. By this time 2nd-Lieutenant Jackson had been wounded; and 2nd-Lieutenant Johnson, either killed or wounded, was missing. Both Lewis-gun detachments were out of action, one gun being lost and the other brought back damaged. The failure of the attack was ascribed to (1) it was anticipated by the enemy; (2) machine-guns had escaped our barrage; (3) loss of two officers besides other heavy casualties. The latter amounted to fifty-four all told.

On the next night the Battalion was relieved and went into reserve, but before coming out 2nd-Lieutenant R. O. Bassham was killed on patrol —one month after joining the Battalion.

During May seventeen Military Medals were awarded in the Battalion.

On June 2nd the 37th Division was relieved by the 61st Division and was transferred to the First Army and in G.H.Q. Reserve. Consequently the Thirteenth Battalion on coming out from reserve on June 2nd was moved by 'bus from Arras to Berlencourt (fourteen miles west of Arras), and then on the 6th to Sachin (eight miles north of St. Pol). Next day it

marched to Erny-St.-Julien, where it remained training for a fortnight. During this period Battalion Sports were held. The Mile Handicap, curiously enough, was won by Major A. N. Strode Jackson—former Olympic Champion at this distance.

On the 23rd the Battalion began moving further north and by the 25th was in camp near Loker and now formed part of the IXth Corps, Second Army. On the 28th it went into support trenches in the left sub-sector of the 111th Brigade which was holding the right sector of the divisional front on the forward slope of the Wytschaete-Messines Ridge, and between those two villages.

Ten days were spent here, digging and carrying, until on July 7th the Battalion moved into the line which consisted of outposts south-east of Oosttaverne ; the scene, it will be recalled, of the Third Battalion's exploits on June 7th. There is little to record of this tour, which lasted only until the 11th, when the Battalion marched back to hutments at Dranoutre. For a fortnight the Battalion laboured unceasingly "under the R.E.s," salving material, or else burying cables for "Signals," until the 26th, when it took over a one-company front on the left portion of the line last occupied.

On the 29th it marched to camps at Lightning Farm and Beaver Hall on Kemmel Hill.

So much for the summering of the eleven Battalions of the Rifle Brigade during 1917.

The time has now come to begin the story of the greatest offensive battle of that year ; a battle in which all the Battalions were to be engaged at least once and which, passing to history as the Third Battle of Ypres, is more commonly known by the name of its grimdest episode—"Passchendaele."

CHAPTER IV

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.*

† "AS soon as this preliminary operation (The Messines Battle) had been successfully accomplished, it became possible to take in hand our final dispositions for our main offensive east and north of Ypres. Owing to the great extent of front to be dealt with, the Fifth Army took over command of the front from Observatory Ridge (east of Zillebeke) to Boesinghe on the 10th June, and the whole of our available resources were directed to completing the preparations for the attack.

" It had been agreed that French troops should take part in these operations, and should extend my left flank northwards beyond Boesinghe. The relief by British troops of the French troops holding the coast sector from St. George's to the sea was accordingly arranged for, and was successfully completed ten days later.

" In the first week of July the Belgian troops holding the front from Boesinghe to Noordschoote were relieved by the First French Army, under the command of General Anthoine. . . .

" On no previous occasion, not excepting the attack on the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge, had the whole of the ground from which we had to attack been so completely exposed to the enemy's observation.

" Even after the enemy had been driven from the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge, he still possessed excellent direct observation over the Salient from the east and south-east, as well as from the Pilckem Ridge to the north. Nothing existed at Ypres to correspond with the vast caves and cellars which proved of such value in the days prior to the Arras battle, and the provision of shelter for the troops presented a very serious problem. . . .

" The front of the Allied attack extended from the Lys River opposite Deulemont northwards to beyond Steenstraat, a distance of over fifteen miles, but the main blow was to be delivered by the Fifth Army on a front of about seven and a half miles, from the Zillebeke-Zandvoorde road to Boesinghe, inclusive.

" Covering the right of the Fifth Army, the task of the Second Army was to advance a short distance only. Its principal object at this stage

* The General Map of the Ypres Salient will be found facing p. 166.
† Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch.

was to increase the area threatened by the attack and so force the enemy to distribute the fire of his artillery. I had other tasks in view for it at a later period.

"On the left of the Fifth Army the First French Army was to advance its right in close touch with the British forces and secure them from counter-attack from the north. . . .

"The plan of attack on the Fifth Army front was to advance in a series of bounds, with which the right of the First French Army was to keep step. These bounds were arranged so as to suit, as far as possible, both the position of the principal lines of the enemy's defences and the configuration of the ground.

"It was hoped that in this first attack our troops would succeed in establishing themselves on the crest of the high ground east of Ypres, on which a strong flank could be formed for subsequent operations, and would also secure the crossings of the Steenbeek.

"For this purpose four Army Corps were placed at the disposal of General Sir Hubert Gough."

These four Corps were, from right to left, the IIInd (24th, 30th, 18th and 8th Divisions); the XIXth (15th and 55th Divisions); the XVIIIth (39th and 51st Divisions) and the XIVth (38th and Guards Divisions).

It will be observed that this army thus contained at the beginning of the battle three Battalions only of the Regiment: the Second Battalion in the 8th Division, the Third in the 24th (both in the IIInd Corps), and the Sixteenth in the 39th.

The date of the attack had originally been fixed for July 25th, but it was postponed, first to July 28th, and finally to the 31st.

The general objective of the IIInd Corps on this day was to secure four successive lines known by the customary colours. These were:—

- (1) The Blue Line. Shrewsbury Forest—Stirling Castle—Bellewaerde Ridge.
- (2) The Black Line. Dumbarton Lakes—Herenthage Chateau—Westhoek Ridge.
- (3) The Green Line. Tower Hamlets—Veldhoek—Polygon Wood—Potsdam and, if opportunity arose,
- (4) The Red Line. Molenaarelsthoek—Broodseinde Ridge.

For this purpose the 24th Division, on the right, would be employed for the three first stages, and the 8th Division, on the left, for all four.

* On July 31st the 24th Division was to attack on a three-brigade front,

* General Map of the Ypres Salient.

the 17th Brigade being on the left with the 73rd Brigade next to it in the centre. There were three objectives : the first of these was the care of the 1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers, the second of the 12th Battalion of the same Regi-

The Third Battalion. ment and the third—the Green Line—of the Third Battalion. Starting from south of Observatory Ridge the Bodmin Copse. line of advance would take the Battalion with its left July 31st, 1917. passing south of Bodmin Copse and its right through the northern part of Shrewsbury Forest. The Battalion was to move on a three-company front ; "B" Company, the right firing-line company on a hundred yards front with its right on the Basseville Beck followed by "C" Company in close support. Their objective was Tower Hamlets, from whence back to their starting-point a defensive flank would be formed facing south. "A" and "D" Companies, on the left, on a three hundred and fifty yards front would capture the objective from Tower Hamlets to some houses on the Menin Road about twelve hundred yards short of Gheluvelt. It will be observed therefore that the Green Line to be taken and held by the Battalion had an obtuse angle in the centre—at Tower Hamlets—the line to the right of this point facing practically south and to the left of it south-east. Subsequently the Battalion would take and occupy an enemy trench two hundred to three hundred yards in advance of the Green Line.

Such was the general scheme and very complete orders were issued regarding the successive moves of the Battalion.

The later of these moves depended upon the success achieved by the leading battalions. Zero hour was 3.50 a.m., but the Battalion would not be called upon to move until nearly four hours later from its assembly position in Hedge Street Tunnels.

The move to the Tunnels took place on the evening and night of July 30th and, thanks to careful previous reconnaissance and good guide-work, was carried out without difficulty. The Tunnels themselves, though, made bad accommodation as they were much over-crowded, containing as they did the whole of Brigade H.Q. as well ; structurally also they were inconvenient, the passages being very narrow caused great congestion and the atmosphere became awful.

* The morning of the 31st was very hazy and dark and owing to the recent heavy rain the ground formed a very serious obstacle. At 7.35 a.m. the Battalion started to file out and took up position in artillery formation. In the meanwhile, the leading battalions were suffering very heavy casualties and for one reason and another had borne too much to the left ; in fact, they were moving north-east instead of east.

* The account of the action is taken from the Battalion and Brigade War Diaries.

The forming up of the Third Battalion was considerably interfered with by hostile shelling which at times became very heavy and "A" Company had the misfortune to lose its company commander, company serjeant-major and another officer; this might have caused more confusion than it did "had not 2nd-Lieutenant H. Brierley quickly realized the position and taken charge of the company in a most efficient manner." Still, delay was caused and the company slightly lost direction and advanced in rear of "D" Company instead of on that company's right.

The advance began at 8.35 a.m. and the Battalion almost at once came under heavy machine-gun fire and it became necessary to deploy and advance by short rushes which, owing to the heavy and difficult going, was very exhausting. A machine-gun, which had escaped detection, and had not been mopped up by previous waves, opened enfilade fire on our right, but this was dealt with by a Lewis-gun of "C" Company, which was in support on the right, and was quickly silenced at a range where no rifle-grenade would have been of use.

Owing to the trouble on the right, "D" Company, on the left, became somewhat in advance of the remainder of the Battalion and was ordered to halt somewhere on the southern edge of Bodmin Copse, there being, at this time, no one on either flank.

"A" Company now came up on the left joining up "D" Company with the 21st Brigade of the 30th Division.

At about 10 a.m., just as "B" Company was passing through what was then the foremost line of the brigade, our barrage quickened up; although it was some way off it momentarily quietened the enemy machine-guns and "B" Company, seizing this opportunity, pushed forward and established itself some way in front, its actual orders being to gain a position giving observation down the slopes leading to the Basseville Beek and to consolidate on that line.

"C" Company was ordered to form a defensive right flank; it was impossible to push on, there being no one on our flanks.

Orders were given by Brigade H.Q. to consolidate in depth the Battalion, in front line, to dig in between the original first and second objectives. This proved impossible and the line finally consolidated by the Battalion was in rear of the first objective with its left on Bodmin Copse.

During the advance a hostile aeroplane was most offensive, flying very low, marking down our positions, firing at the troops and dropping egg-bombs. One machine was brought down by A/Corporal Ripper with a Lewis-gun.

On the night 1st/2nd August the Battalion was relieved and went back

to Hedge Street dug-outs and on the 3rd it returned to its previous camp—Micmac.

Casualties in the Battalion were five officers (2nd-Lieutenants P. W. C. Northcroft, P. Adam, M.C., L. O. Chapman, W. S. Hill and Captain E. Patey) and forty-two other ranks killed: Captain P. G. Mayer, 2nd-Lieutenant E. G. Kemp, M.C., and one hundred and seventy-five other ranks wounded and ten missing. It may be mentioned that so cold and wet was the weather that during these three days the Battalion suffered more sick casualties than during the whole of the previous winter.

The following immediate awards were made subsequently for this period:—one D.S.O. (Lieut.-Colonel E. R. Kewley); four M.C.s; one Bar to D.C.M.; two D.C.M.s; two Bars to M.M. and eight M.M.s.

The remainder of August was spent in two tours in the line and in reserve in camp near Dickebusch. The weather, as all the world knows, was vile and conditions must have been extremely disagreeable.

The Third Battalion was not fated to take part in any further of the set-piece attacks of the Third Battle of Ypres and, for the present, will be left here on August 31st in the trenches of the Klein Zillebeke sector.

**The Second
Battalion.
Westhoek Ridge.
July 31st, 1917.**

It has been seen that the 8th Division was to be concerned with all four stages of the attack. The scene lay over the exceedingly difficult country in the angle enclosed by the Ypres-Menin road and the Ypres-Roulers railway—country which included several ragged woods and the considerable obstacle of Bellewaarde Lake. The left boundary of the division was the railway, exclusive, the 15th Division of the XIXth Corps being on its left.

The four objectives, so far as the 8th Division was concerned, are, for convenience, taken from left to right, each running generally in a south-south-easterly direction. The right boundaries are not given as they do not affect the action of the Second Battalion.

The Blue Line started six hundred yards short of where the railway crossed the Westhoek-Frezenberg road and ran along the ridge east of Bellewaarde Lake. The Black Line ran from eight hundred yards beyond the Blue Line and included Westhoek.

The Green Line, starting at the junction of the railway and the Ypres-Zonnebeke road, ran almost south to the Westhoek-Zonnebeke road. The Red Line was beyond the Becllaere-Broodseinde road.

The attack on the Blue and Black Lines was to be made by the 24th Brigade, on the right, and the 23rd Brigade. The attack on the Green Line was to be made by the 25th Brigade with the 2nd Bn. Lincolnshire

Regt. on the right, the 1st Bn. Royal Irish Rifles in the centre and the Second Battalion on the left. The 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. would be in support.

Zero hour for the general attack was, it will be recalled, 3.50 a.m. and the attack of the 25th Brigade was to start at 10.18 a.m. After the capture of the Green Line, regimental calls would be sounded on the bugle and 25th Brigade orders directed that battalions would arrange for relays of buglers to take up the call and pass it back to the Black Line. The advance on the Red Line would be made by the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. assisted by tanks and "B" Squadron 1st/1st Yorkshire Dragoons; but this advance was conditional upon the degree of enemy resistance encountered.

The Green Line was the main objective of the IIInd Corps, would be consolidated by the 25th Brigade, and held at all costs.

As a preliminary to the battle the Second Battalion spent the whole of June training first at Rouge Croix and later in the Poperinghe and Steenvoorde areas. On June 12th the Battle Patrol Platoon disappeared. On June 29th "B," "C" and half "D" Companies were detached to work under the 177th Tunnelling Company R.E. and next day the remainder of the Battalion marched to Dominion Camp (a mile north-west of Ouderdom), where it remained until July 9th. During this period the working-parties sustained a certain number of casualties, the enemy, since his experience of June 7th, being intensely suspicious of all tunnelling activities, although, as it happened, the work in this case was that of constructing dug-outs.

On the 11th a further period of training was carried out, the Battalion being railed to the Tournehem area, not far from Calais.

On the 24th the move east began and on the night of the 30th the Battalion moved into its assembly position which, for the whole of the 25th Brigade, was in Half Way House dug-outs just north and east of the Moated Grange and some seven hundred yards north of Zillebeke.

The War Diary of the Second Battalion is of little service in following the events of this day. In fact the Diary mentions neither events nor even the day itself. In accordance with instructions from 25th Brigade the Diary for July is made up to the 30th and closes with the record of the move last mentioned "preparatory to attack."

The entry for August 1st reads: "The Battalion arrived at Halifax Camp at about 10.30 a.m."

In compiling this record it has, accordingly, been necessary to extract such details as are available in the 8th Division and 25th Brigade Diaries

and in "The Eighth Division in War" * supplemented by such information as could be given by survivors of the action.

† According to orders the 25th Brigade was to be formed up behind the Westhoek Ridge at 9.50 a.m. with a view to advancing under the barrage at 10.18 a.m.

When the advance began the Battalions moving north of Bellewaerde Lake had little or no difficulty, though a few casualties were caused by machine-gun fire from the direction of Glencorse Wood (about the Black Line of the division on the right).

As soon as the news was received that the Black Line had been captured the Brigade Commander (Brig.-General C. Coffin) moved forward with a small advanced party to fix the position of Brigade H.Q. and carry out a preliminary reconnaissance with the four commanding officers. It became immediately apparent that the situation on Westhoek Ridge was not what had been anticipated. In addition to the machine-gun fire from Glencorse Wood, enemy machine-guns and snipers were firing from the neighbourhood of Kit and Kat and from the Westhoek cross-roads ; houses on the Westhoek road were also held by the enemy.

General Coffin decided that it would be impossible to adhere to the original time-table and programme and at 8.30 a.m. a message was sent to Divisional H.Q. to the effect that more time was needed to clear up the situation and that a fresh attack would have to be planned behind a new barrage. In the meanwhile battalions were ordered to form up ready for an advance as close as possible to the original forming-up line but to remain in artillery formation. General Coffin himself went back to Ziel House (in the Blue Line), where he found 23rd Brigade H.Q. Here he was told that both that brigade and the 24th held the Black Line.

Accordingly it was decided to carry out the attack as originally laid down and orders to that effect were issued at about 9.20 a.m. Unfortunately this order did not reach the Second Battalion and a second order to the same effect was only received at 10.10 a.m., with the result that the Battalion was late in starting.

When the attack started the centre battalion got on all right as did the Battalion—although somewhat behind. On the right, however, the 2nd Bn. Lincolnshire Regt. was held up by the enemy on Westhoek Ridge ; the division on the right appeared to be held up in front of Glencorse Wood soon after 11.0 a.m.

Within the next half-hour the 1st Bn. Royal Irish Rifles reported that

* By Lieut.-Colonel J. H. Boraston, C.B., O.B.E., and Captain Cyril E. O. Bax.

† Map will be found on p. 113.

its advance was held up by machine-guns and snipers which had been untouched by the barrage, being west of the line on which the barrage fell, and the Second Battalion also reported that it had reached approximately as far as the line on which the barrage fell but could advance no further. Casualties had been heavy and the right flank was exposed.

As a fact the centre company of the Royal Irish Rifles had succeeded in reaching the line of the Haanebeek while a gap had developed between their left company and the right company of the Second Battalion.

This company also had pushed forward to about Haanebeek Wood, but the exact position was never verified as all the officers of the company were casualties.

Eventually enfilade fire forced both these advanced companies back to the main line. This line ran, from left to right, from the road-railway crossing three hundred yards beyond the Black Line for some four hundred yards beyond, and parallel to, the Black Line and then turning south-westwards crossed the Black Line towards Kit and Kat.

The Lincolnshire Regiment, again owing to enfilade fire, had been unable to make any appreciable progress on the right, and all idea of further advance being given up, a line was dug on the west side of the Black Line with its right just south of Westhoek cross-roads.

Before mid-day enemy forces reported beyond Westhoek and in the Haanebeck valley made half-hearted and disjointed counter-attacks but were easily driven off.

Later, between 2.0 and 2.30 p.m., a somewhat more determined counter-attack was made on the right centre; this was delivered by fresh troops, but after one or two temporary successes, failed to retain any point in our line.

About 2.40 p.m. General Coffin visited the Battalion, which he found in a very exposed position with its right flank in the air. As a result the 23rd Brigade was asked to fill the gap and the Battalion's right was withdrawn to gain touch with the 2nd Bn. Middlesex Regt. which was moved forward slightly.

From 5.0 p.m. onwards the enemy continually threatened the position of the Battalion on the south of the railway. All available S.A.A. was sent up and the artillery barrage drawn in by three hundred yards; the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. also sent up part of a company in support.

The enemy lost heavily from our rifle, machine-gun, and Lewis-gun fire while attempting to form up at the bottom of the valley and, probably for this reason, never pushed an attack right home.

There is no doubt, according to General Coffin's report, that a strong attack would have materialized, but for the tenacity with which our men held their ground and the way in which they took advantage of every target offered them.

That night the 25th Brigade (less the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt.) was relieved and moved first to behind the Bellewaerde Ridge and then to the Halifax area near Ouderdom, where the Second Battalion arrived about 10.30 a.m.

The 8th Division received from General Sir Hubert Gough, commanding Fifth Army, a special letter of congratulation for its work on this day.

Casualties in the Second Battalion had, unfortunately, been heavy. 2nd-Lieutenants Hon. A. E. Keppel, L. H. Hillman, W. C. Field, G. H. Jackson and twenty-four other ranks were killed; Captains H. R. Price, W. A. Martin, I. C. Maclean, M.C., R.A.M.C., 2nd-Lieutenants L. W. J. Pinnock, W. Brown, G. C. Chatfield, V. C. Knollys (gas), C. L. Anderson, J. H. Bowler, M.C., J. M. L. Renton and one hundred and ninety-five other ranks were wounded; Lieut.-Colonel Hon. R. Brand and Captain J. J. B. Cole were wounded (at duty) and seventy-one other ranks were missing.

Re-organizing and training was at once taken in hand and on August 3rd Captain H. H. Elliott, R.A.M.C., joined as medical officer in place of Captain I. C. Maclean, M.C.

On August 5th the Battalion 'bussed to the Steenvoorde area, where it remained until the 10th, when it returned by the same medium to Halifax Camp and marched immediately to Swan Chateau and took over dug-outs there ready for impending operations; these being postponed the Battalion marched back to Halifax Camp in the evening of the next day.

On the 12th it marched up to Ypres in the afternoon and took over tunnels in the Ramparts at "The Esplanade" and Lille Gate. Colonel Brand, being supernumerary brigade commander in case of a casualty, Major J. J. B. Cole had temporary command of the Battalion for the forthcoming operations, which are described later.

**The Sixteenth
Battalion.**

**The Steenbeek.
July 31st, 1917.**

The Sixteenth Battalion having spent most of July training at Serques (north-west of St. Omer) began its move up to the line on the 21st and by the 29th was in dug-outs on the east canal bank north of Ypres and opposite La Brique and St. Jean.

Lieut.-Colonel Hon. E. Coke, M.C., had, on the 20th, joined from the Second Battalion and assumed command. The first operation order under his name directs that for the march to the canal bank:—"Before leaving camp every man will have cotton-wool in his nose."

July 30th was to be a day of rest and all men were enjoined, under dire penalty, to remain in their dug-outs. These, it may be mentioned, were in the custody of a "Canal Bank Major" who was the deciding authority on all questions of accommodation.

It will be remembered that the XVIIIth Corps consisted of the 39th and 51st Divisions.

* In the attack of July 31st the 117th Brigade was to be on the left of the 39th Division with the 116th Brigade on its right and the 152nd Brigade of the 51st Division on its left. The 117th Brigade was commanded by Brig-General G. A. Armytage, D.S.O., of the 60th Rifles.

The tasks allotted to the Brigade were :—

- (1) To capture the German front-line system
- (2) To capture the Kitchener system
- (3) to secure the crossings of the Steenbeek.

The 118th Brigade was later to pass through the Brigade and capture the Langemarck system.

The first objective was bounded by the Dotted-Blue Line; the second by the Dotted-Black Line and the third by the Dotted-Green Line; the objective of the 118th Brigade was known as the Solid Green Line.

The 16th Bn. Sherwood Foresters on the right and the 17th Bn. 60th on the left were to capture the German front-line system. The 17th Bn. Sherwood Foresters on the right and the Sixteenth Battalion on the left would capture the Kitchener system and secure the crossings over the Steenbeek.

A feature of General Armytage's orders was that the two rear battalions, including their headquarters, were to start off close up behind the leading battalions and our barrage. By this means it was hoped that the whole brigade would have advanced beyond the enemy barrage area before that barrage fell and that commanding officers would not be cut off from their companies. How sound was this scheme will presently appear.

Colonel Coke issued very clear and precise orders, but it is not intended to quote from them and that for a very singular reason.

The Battalion account of the action is also very clear and precise and it is proposed to quote verbatim from it for every movement during the day followed exactly on the lines and at the time ordered. Only in one particular does the account differ from the orders; in the latter it was predicted that on the evening of the 31st the Battalion would be withdrawn from the Steenbeek to reorganize in the old British Lines.

That, as events were to show, did not happen for several days and

* Map will be found on p. 107.

nights, but it was due to no fault on the part of the Sixteenth Battalion, nor of the 117th Brigade.

The following is the account in the Battalion War Diary—verbatim except for a few omissions.

“The Battalion assembled in and around Bilge Trench.

“Assembly was complete by 12.50 a.m. The assembly position was previously reconnoitred by all platoon commanders and sticks marking platoon boundaries were placed in position. These materially assisted rapid assembly.

“Zero hour was 3.50 a.m., which was about half an hour before dawn. The Battalion advanced at zero hour in artillery formation—the front platoons being fifty yards behind the rear wave of preceding battalion (17th Bn. 60th). The enemy barrage came down on our assembly position at zero plus eight minutes, but by this time the Battalion was crossing the German front-line trench and so escaped it. Direction was well maintained and the Battalion formed up behind the barrage at the Dotted-Blue Line waiting to advance. Up to this time the Battalion had suffered few casualties.

“At zero plus 1 hour 23 minutes the Battalion advanced to capture the Black Line.

“The formation now was the first two waves in extended order, and the last two waves in artillery formation (by platoons).

“Racecourse Farm offered serious opposition to my left companies (“A” and “B”), as it had a machine-gun in a concrete emplacement which offered resistance and inflicted severe casualties till the last. This position was rushed and the machine-gun captured and eight enemy killed. A mopping-up party left behind captured another two Germans. My left company was fired at by a machine-gun from Bochcastel Estaminet. This was silenced by rifle-grenades and Lewis-guns.

“The leading wave advanced into Cannon and Canoe Trenches (Black Line) and was fired on by several machine-guns and snipers in Kitchener’s Wood. One machine-gun was giving a great deal of trouble and appeared to be firing from the “M” in Bochcastel Estaminet. This gun was captured with two prisoners: rifle-grenades and Lewis-guns were used in the capture. Two officers of my Battalion (Lieutenants Taylor and J. A. Barrett) were killed by this machine-gun.

“My right company was fired at (during the advance to the Black Line) by a machine-gun which was in a concrete strong point built in the open (in the re-entrant outside Kitchener’s Wood). This was dealt with and the gun captured with eight prisoners and two wounded prisoners. This

concrete emplacement was splendidly camouflaged and was not shown on any map.* The size of the emplacement was about 6 feet high and had an area of 20 feet by 30 : the concrete was from 18 to 24 inches in thickness and withstood our barrage.

"The right company was fired at by a machine-gun about the middle of Kitchener's Wood. This was dealt with by capturing the gun and the gun-team was killed here.

"Kitchener's Wood was cleared and my leading companies advanced to, and dug in on, the Black Dotted-Line. Snipers and machine-guns were encountered in this wood and the enemy there either killed or captured. During consolidation of Black Dotted-Line machine-guns were active from Regina Cross, Alberta, and another emplacement.

"The two rear waves now passed through the Black Dotted-Line and advanced to the protective barrage ready to attack the Steenbeek. These two companies were now in extended order and advanced with the barrage at zero plus 3 hours 40 minutes (7.30 a.m.).

"Regina Cross, which consisted of three strong points, offered serious resistance to my left company by heavy machine-gun fire. Platoon tactics were used in enveloping it by pushing round the flanks and using Lewis-guns, rifle-grenades, and No. 27 phosphorous grenades. These positions were then rushed from all sides and the garrison of about thirty was killed, or captured. Three machine-guns were taken also. Little further opposition was met with until the Steenbeek was reached and crossed † at 8.1 a.m., when a machine-gun opened fire from the extreme left flank. This position was rushed and the machine-gun and four prisoners captured.

"After capturing the Steenbeek a line was consolidated about thirty yards beyond and Lewis-guns pushed out in front to cover the consolidation. This line was dug and the men under cover by 9.0 a.m. At 8.7 a.m. a contact aeroplane came over which called for flares ; these were lit by most advanced troops. At 10.30 a.m. three enemy aeroplanes flew over the Steenbeek at a low altitude. Our troops fired at them and they retired."

Here ends the verbatim report of the action. The Sixteenth Battalion had faithfully and punctually accomplished that which it set out to do and in doing so had given many pretty examples of company and platoon tactics.

At 10.30 a.m. troops of the 118th Brigade passed through the line of the Battalion on their way to the Solid Green Line. About two hours

* This appears to be the first mention of the new German device—the "pill-box."

† The Steenbeek here is shown on the map as having banks six feet high and a width of ten feet.

later, for some reason immaterial to this record, they withdrew and small parties were assimilated with the companies of the Sixteenth Battalion.

Some thirty minutes later scouts reported that the enemy was digging in about five hundred yards away. As prisoners had said that the enemy troops had withdrawn to a considerable distance it was thought that this presaged a counter-attack. Colonel Coke, however, was in full and intimate liaison with his neighbours, the 17th Bn. Sherwood Foresters and the 1st/6th Bn. Gordon Highlanders, so the situation—as far as the Steenbeek—was well in hand.

At about 2.0 p.m. a patrol reported signs of a contemplated enemy counter-attack behind his newly-dug line, but nothing happened until 9.35 p.m., at which hour the S.O.S. signal went up on the left and the artillery put down a barrage which is called "splendid."

At about 3.25 a.m. four men were observed without equipment or rifle about three hundred yards north-east of the Culvert. A patrol was sent out to investigate and the men proved to be Germans. When brought in they were interrogated by a Rifleman who spoke German fluently and stated a "Division of Guards" had been formed up to counter-attack when our barrage came down. This barrage entirely broke up the intended attack and these men had surrendered rather than have another such experience.

In the meanwhile, at about 5.30 p.m. the Battalion had been reinforced by two companies of the 17th Bn. 60th, each about fifty strong; one was placed in the Black Line and one in the Black Dotted-Line.

On August 1st the Steenbeek Line was reinforced with one platoon from each of the companies on the Black Dotted-Line. The men were then in a very exhausted condition and the trenches were falling in. It must be remembered that the weather was execrable and remained so for four days and already rifles were becoming unusable owing to immersion in mud and water.

On the 2nd an additional platoon from each company on the Black Dotted-Line was sent up to the Steenbeek Line.

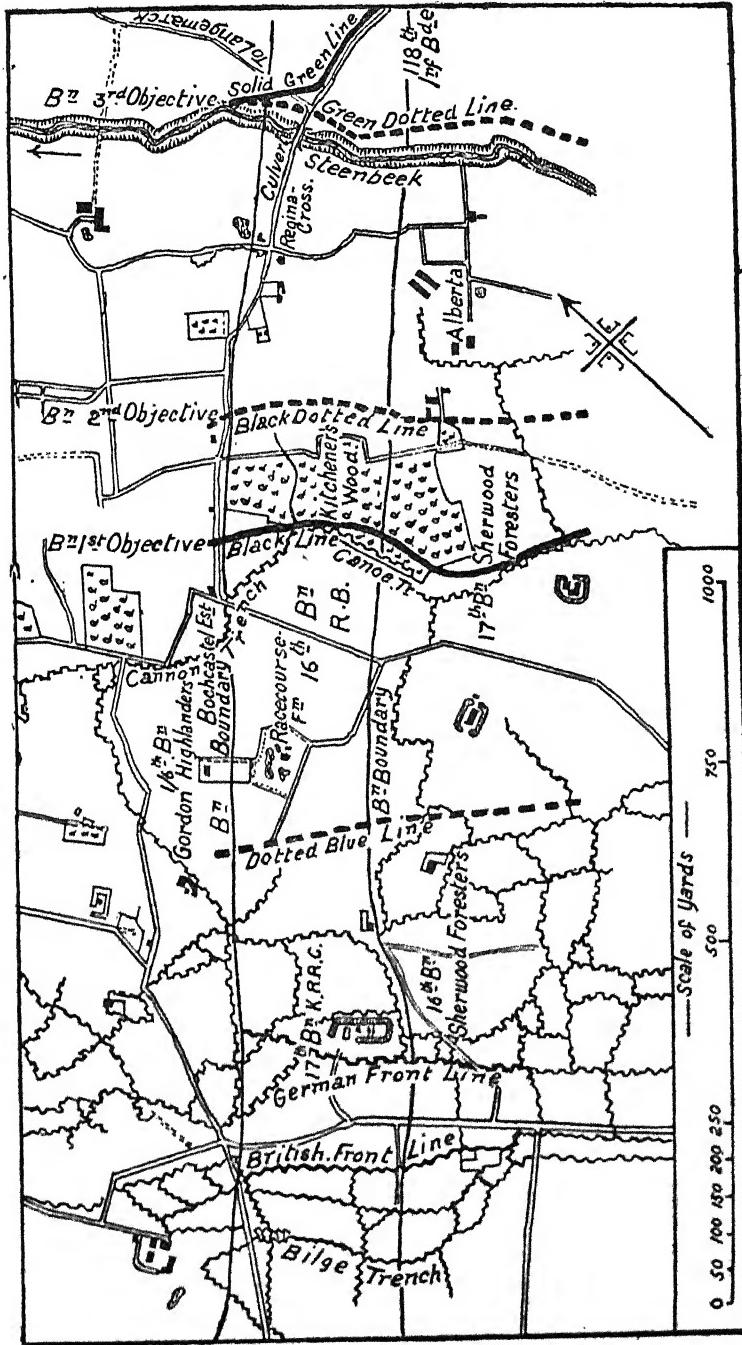
So things went on; on the 3rd the 60th attached were withdrawn to move to another part of the line and during this day twenty men, having collapsed and become semi-unconscious, were sent to hospital. A patrol sent out that night, however, found no enemy within seven hundred yards of the Battalion front.

At last on the 4th the Battalion was relieved and went into support in the Blue Line.

During the whole period all lines as far as the Black Line were heavily bombarded but, as a compensation, the Dotted Green Line afforded excellent

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.

31st July–10th November, 1917.



THE ATTACK OF THE SIXTEENTH BATTALION ON THE STEENBECK.

31st July, 1917.

opportunities for sniping and at least twenty Germans were known to have been accounted for.

There had also been more than one attempt to counter-attack by parties about one company strong; these were broken up by Lewis-gun and deliberate rifle fire.

Some points, noted by Colonel Coke, were the value of the second water-bottle carried on the men and filled with cold tea, also of the issue of rum to the front line which saved many men from collapse.

Rifle and phosphorous grenades were held to be most useful when tackling strong points and a note on the subject of bombs is refreshing—“Not used.”

On August 5th the Battalion moved back to the canal bank for rest and so ended a remarkable tour. After the long and weary months spent in and about the Salient the Sixteenth Battalion had at last had its opportunity and had cheerfully and skilfully grasped it with both hands.

The Battalion had taken a hundred and fifty-four prisoners and seven machine-guns at small cost to itself: it was after that that casualties mounted, its losses being:—Killed—the two officers already mentioned and thirty other ranks: wounded—2nd-Lieutenants W. S. Cull, G. H. Ridley, L. J. P. Thomas, E. Marriott, W. B. Arnold, A. Bain, A. B. McCrae, and two hundred and seventy-one other ranks: wounded (at duty)—Lieut.-Colonel Hon. E. Coke, M.C., Captain N. B. Risley, M.C., 2nd-Lieutenants R. H. Membrey, J. A. Pinnegar, J. B. Camp, and seven other ranks, with eighteen missing.

On August 7th the Battalion was railed from Vlamertinghe to Caestre and embussed for billets between Flêtre and Meteren. There it remained until the 13th resting; during this period it was addressed by the Divisional Commander—Major-General G. J. Cuthbert—and inspected by the Army Commander—General Sir Herbert Plumer—the 39th Division being now back in the Second Army.

Before proceeding to the second stage of the Third Battle of Ypres it may be convenient to show here how the measure of success achieved in the first stage by the three Battalions of the Rifle Brigade is indicative of the results in the Fifth Army as a whole.

The Second Army had met with success but in the Fifth Army fortunes had varied. South of Westhoek the German first system of defence only had fallen. North of the village the enemy second line also had been taken as far as St. Julien; north of that again the second line had been passed and the line of the Steenbeek held.

It has been seen what happened to the three Battalions ; the Third Battalion in the south had, through no fault of its own, made little progress, whilst the Sixteenth in the north had had a most successful day. The Second Battalion in the centre was at the crucial point of the whole line —the part between the un-captured Westhoek and the XIXth Corps, north of the railway.

By holding on to the ground gained the 25th Brigade, especially its left—the Second Battalion—had secured the right flank of the XIXth Corps. Had the 25th Brigade fallen, or been driven, back it is probable that the 15th Division—its neighbour on the left—would have had to conform, thereby bringing with it successively each of the successful divisions to the north.

THE SECOND STAGE. August 16th, 1917.

The weather which, as has been seen, broke completely on July 31st remained so bad that it was not until the middle of August that a slight improvement made possible the launching of the next general attack. In this, four battalions of the Regiment were engaged, the Second and Twelfth Battalions being employed on the opening day ; the Tenth and Eleventh Battalions were engaged in a preliminary attack on August 14th which may be taken as a part of the main attack. It is proposed to deal first with the Second Battalion.

The Second
Battalion.
The Haanebeek.
August 16th, 1917.
2.0 a.m.

* On the night of August 13th the Battalion moved up into the line on Westhoek Ridge ; owing to the difficulty of the country and heavy shelling, which compelled a temporary halt, the relief was not completed until nearly

The front line consisted of short lengths of trench and posts on the east side of the Westhoek-Frezenberg road while the support line in Jaffa Trench, just west of the road, was more or less continuous.

On the evening of the 14th the enemy put down a very heavy barrage on the support line and 2nd-Lieutenant and Acting Adjutant C. Mackeson was severely wounded ; unfortunately he died in hospital later.

On the 15th there was much work for carrying parties, also shelling and sniping.

Some of our own 6-inch shells were falling between our front and support line. " Luckily," says the Diary, " a major of R.F.A. was in our O.P. at the time and we got off his corroborative evidence by pigeon straight to the Corps. The gunners couldn't then say ' the infantry always say it's

* Map will be found on p. 113.

us when they are shelled.' " After dark it was the intention to advance the line to the road three hundred yards west of the Haanebeek ; in the event, so far from an advance, there was a slight withdrawal as, owing to the division on the right being driven back slightly, the right company of the 2nd Bn. Lincolnshire Regt. was obliged to withdraw in conformity.

The attack of the Fifth Army on this day, August 16th, extended from Inverness Copse to the junction with the French in the north.

The front engaged by the IIInd Corps, on the extreme right, included the Polygone de Zonnebeke and Zonnebeke Redoubt, about one thousand yards south-west of that village.

The 8th Division, on the left of the IIInd Corps, attacked with the 25th Brigade on the right and the 23rd on the left, the 24th being in reserve. The 25th Brigade had in front line the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. on the right and the 1st Bn. Royal Irish Rifles on the left ; the Second Battalion was in support and the 2nd Bn. Lincolnshire Regt. in reserve. On the right of the 8th Division was the 56th Division and on the left the XIXth Corps containing the two Irish Divisions, the 16th and 36th.

The objective was the same Green Line aimed at on July 31st. Zero hour was 4.45 a.m.

The Second Battalion was to find two companies ("A" and "D") as an immediate support to the Royal Irish Rifles with orders to advance at zero plus 20 and take up a position one hundred yards east of the Haanebeek and wait there for orders ready to act on any emergency. For some unexplained reason at 50 minutes before zero "A" and "D" Companies were ordered to come back to the support trench (a distance of about three hundred yards), leaving only four small posts which were in turn withdrawn twenty minutes later.

At zero minus 50 also, orders were sent to "B" Company in reserve to join the Battalion, taking cover in Jaffa Avenue as near Jaffa Trench as possible. This message failed to reach the company which, however, joined the Battalion later.

The story of this day's events is thus told by the Commanding Officer, Major Cole, in the Battalion Diary.

" At zero minus 40 minutes we were ordered by brigade to furnish one company to mop up for the Royal Irish Rifles as their mopping-up company had nearly all become casualties. 'D' Company, who had mopped up on the 31st July, was detailed for this job and Captain Curtis was hurriedly given an idea of the ground and what he had to do. The attack started well and at zero plus 1 hour 15 minutes I had a message from 'A' Company that it had reached its objective one hundred yards east of the Haanebeek.

"From about 8.30 a.m. I could see that everything was not going quite right in front and was rather worried as my support company, 'C,' which had been out carrying all night, had not yet returned. There were only eight Lewis-guns with two men each and half of 'B' Company with me in the support trench. At 9.45 a.m. I saw that the attack on our right front on the ridge had failed and the Germans had counter-attacked successfully, driving the regiment there back and taking some prisoners.

"Numbers of stragglers of various regiments were now filtering back right up to the support line, so I advanced with every available man I could find to our old front-line trench. Here I found Captain Milne with half 'A' Company and various men of other regiments.

"The Battalion did good execution among the Boches who were advancing, from shell-hole to shell-hole, down the opposite slope of the valley during the rest of the morning and early afternoon.

"At 4.15 p.m. Captain Curtis got to Battalion H.Q. with half a dozen Riflemen, he having been till then in shell-holes east of the Haanebeek with a mixed lot of R.B., R.I.R. and West Yorks., and only retired when out of ammunition and practically surrounded. 'D' Company had killed about twenty Germans during their mopping-up and sent back over forty prisoners but, when advancing to support the troops in front who had been heavily counter-attacked and driven back, it suffered very heavy casualties.

"All of 'C' Company who had got lost on Bellewaarde Ridge the night before had by now joined up so that when a message came down from brigade to advance with every possible man to repel a threatened German counter-attack, and to counter-attack them in turn with the sword, we were able to put about another fifty men into the firing-line.

"Captain Curtis, being slightly wounded since the 14th and very exhausted, was left behind at old Battalion H.Q. with 2nd-Lieutenant Nettleton, who had been blown up and rather shaken by a shell, to help him. 2nd-Lieutenant Pinnock with his five signallers and four runners were also left to look after communications.

"On the whole, the telephone line between firing-line and Battalion H.Q. in the support line worked very well, greatly owing to the efforts of A/Corporal Colter.

"About 6.0 p.m., General Coffin came along the front line to our bit of the trenches making a reconnaissance of the position. He told us that we were to be relieved that night and would be withdrawn to an old support line in Jaffa Trench.

"Half the Battalion was relieved that night by 11.0 p.m., but two companies of the relieving battalion lost themselves on that trackless and shell-pitted ground between Bellewaarde and Westhoek Ridge, so that

'A' and half 'C' had to be relieved during daylight on the 17th. This was successfully done by 9.20 a.m."

Next day, August 18th, on relief, the Battalion moved to Bellewaarde Ridge where it "had a quiet day cleaning up in the sun and watching the batteries and working-parties near Birr cross-roads have a very bad time of it from the enemy's heavies."

In the evening the Battalion marched back through Ypres to Halifax Camp.

Casualties since going in were: 2nd-Lieutenants C. Mackesen and R. H. Robinson died of wounds; E. F. Ratliff wounded, Captains A. H. Curtis and H. H. Elliott (R.A.M.C.) wounded "at duty"; 2nd-Lieutenant H. Barker, who only joined the Battalion on the night of the 15th, was missing.

Of other ranks ten were killed, seventy-nine wounded, of whom one died of wounds and six were "at duty," and fifty missing.

Once more the 8th Division had reached its objective, but its neighbours on the right and left had been unable either to progress at all or to maintain themselves in the new position and were one thousand yards behind.

With both flanks in the air and enfiladed from right and left there was no choice but to come back.

During the afternoon of the 19th the Battalion moved by 'bus to billets at Borre in the Caestre area. During its stay here, which lasted until the 27th, the 8th Division was inspected by the Commander-in-Chief.

Reinforcements were received of three officers and two hundred and eighty-eight other ranks: the men were of good physique and above the average standard.

During this period ten Military Medals and one Bar were awarded.

August 25th, the Regimental Birthday, was celebrated by sports under company arrangements and a concert in the evening.

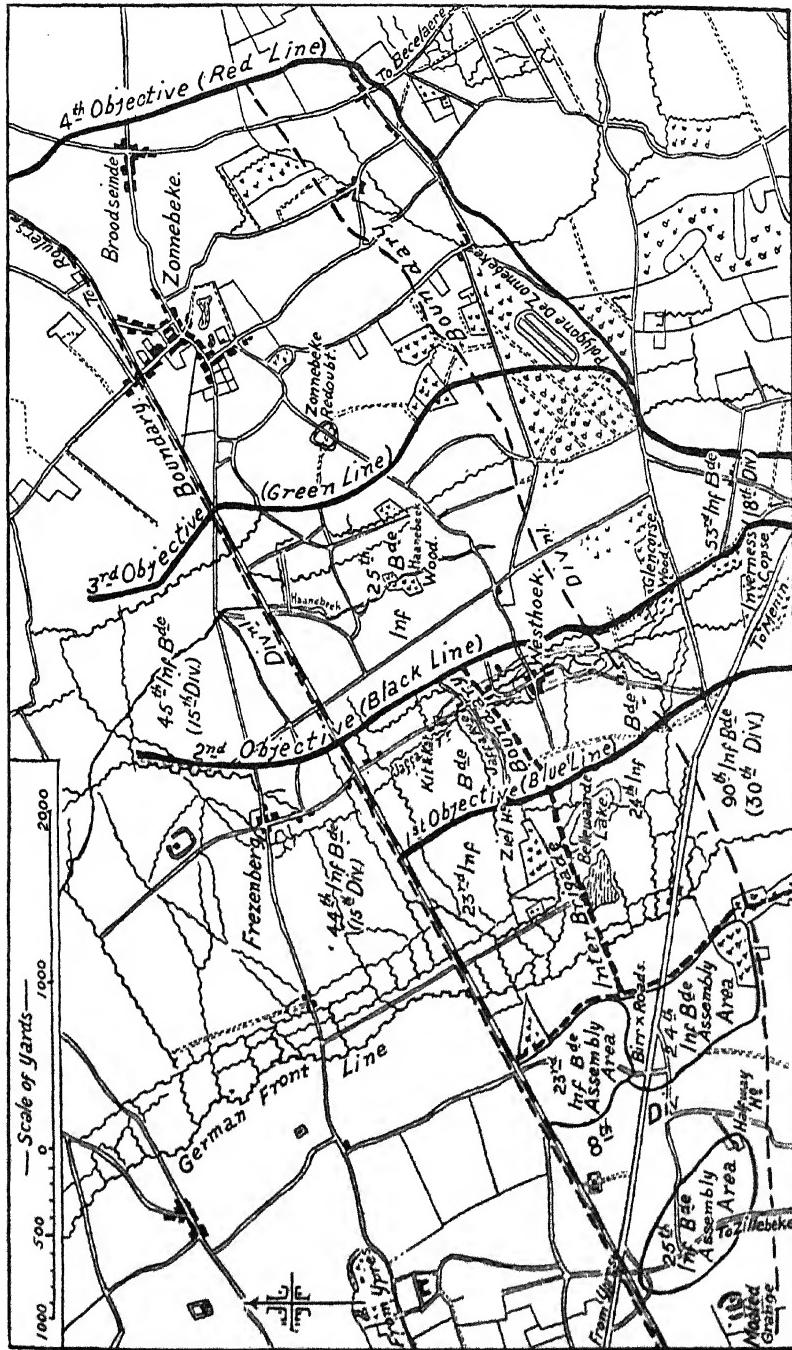
On August 27th the following honours and awards were announced:—D.S.O., Captain I. C. Maclean, M.C., R.A.M.C., three M.C.s, two D.C.M.s and four M.M.s.

On this day the Second Battalion marched from Borre to Kortepyp Camp near Nieppe, the 25th Brigade relieving a New Zealand Brigade in divisional reserve; Colonel Brand being in acting command of the brigade the Battalion was under Major Cole and was now in the IIInd A.N.Z.A.C.

The Tenth,
Eleventh and
Twelfth
Battalions.

On July 1st, it will be remembered, the 20th Division was in rest in the Canaples area. Elaborate programmes were drawn up in each brigade, both for training and for sports and recreation.

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.



ACTION OF THE SECOND BATTALION, WESTHOEK RIDGE, 31ST JULY, 1917,

AND

ATTACK ON THE HAANEBECK, 16TH AUGUST, 1917.

During the month all battalions were inspected by the G.O.C. Division—Major-General T. G. Matheson.

In the Tenth Battalion, Captain Hon. L. H. Tennyson joined and was appointed second-in-command in place of Major J. W. M. Playfair who went home for a three months' course at the Senior Officers' School. In the brigade sports, held in delightful weather, Captain Tennyson won the Officers' 100 Yards ; C.S.-M. Nicholls the Veterans' Race ; Corporal Barklam with Riflemen Ashby, Cook, and Jewell the Limber Turn-out Competition, and the Battalion team the Tug-of-War.

The Eleventh Battalion has left on record the general principles of training during this period.

Specialist training, i.e. Lewis-gunners, stretcher-bearers, snipers and signallers, was in the hands of specialist officers and non-commissioned officers while all other training was left to company commanders. The principles of training and organization were those laid down in two contemporary pamphlets issued by G.H.Q. and known, respectively, as "The Training of a Division in Offensive Action" and "The Training of a Platoon in Attack."

The whole Battalion was put through a musketry course consisting of six practices. The results were very satisfactory, forty-three men qualifying as marksmen and two hundred and sixty as first-class shots.

A riding-school for officers was organized under the supervision of Captain C. E. Jesser-Davis and a divisional horse-show and sports were also held.

On July 14th the original officer survivors of the 59th Brigade dined at the Godebert Restaurant in Amiens ; there were about twenty present and the Eleventh Battalion was represented by Colonel A. E. Cotton, Captains C. P. Warren, A. H. Parry, A. M. Bertie, C. E. Jesser-Davis and G. H. Gilbey.

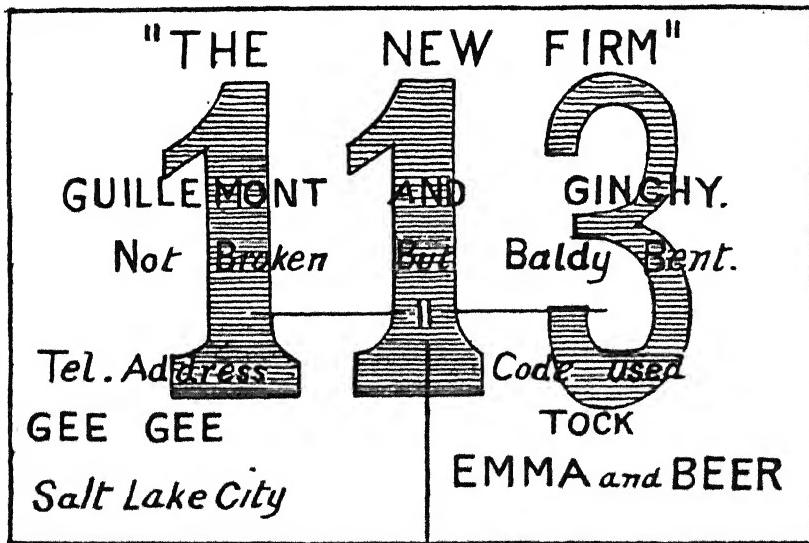
Life was much the same for the Twelfth Battalion which, however, found its billets in Bonneville insanitary and in bad condition. This was remedied so far as the shortage of R.E. material permitted and rooms were fitted up as a canteen and a serjeants' mess.

A brigade boxing competition was held and the Battalion and the 6th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry were the only two to score points, the latter being the winners by $7\frac{1}{2}$ points to $6\frac{1}{2}$.

In an officers' football match the Battalion beat the 12th Bn. 60th by 2-0 : the serjeants of the two battalions combined and held a very successful smoking concert.

In the brigade rifle meeting the Twelfth Battalion won with $24\frac{1}{2}$ points against the next battalion's 23. There were six matches, two individual and four team-shoots.

But probably the greatest event of the month was the 60th Infantry Brigade Summer Race Meeting. This was held near Canaples before a good attendance of spectators from the division. Except for one shower the weather was kind and the meeting was a great success. "In accordance with precedent," says the 60th Brigade Diary, "Brigade H.Q. drove to the course in a G.S. waggon, drawn by four mules in hand." The brigade bookmakers did a roaring trade for the benefit of the canteens; a printed race card and a specimen of a bookie's card are faithfully preserved in the War Diary; a reproduction of the latter is given here.



N.B.—The misprint is in the original.

The Gaspirator Plate (4f.-Flat) was won by Captain W. C. Messenger's (Twelfth Battalion) "Michael"—owner up.

The stay of the 20th Division in the Canaples area came to an end on July 20th and the three Battalions found themselves in camp near Proven, the journey north being made by rail. The Twelfth Battalion detrained at Hopoutre station where, exactly a year before, it had entrained for its journey south and to the Somme.

The same Battalion records that "there are masses of troops in every direction and everything looks like the preparations for a big strafe. The

main roads consist of one stream of motor-lorries and cars and troops on the move. The sky is dotted with aeroplanes of all makes and sizes and in the distance can be seen the line of observation balloons which mark the position of our line in front. Towards evening there is a slight rumble of guns in the distance but nothing compared with what is to come." It is the Twelfth Battalion Diary also which observes, " We are now in the Fifth Army and back in the XIVth Corps, which is still commanded by Lord Cavan, so we must expect some fighting ! "

Training for two of the battalions was continued up to the end of the month and officers and non-commissioned officers inspected the model of the ground over which it was expected that they would fight.

On the 25th, however, the Tenth Battalion was suddenly ordered to relieve the 13th Bn. Royal Welsh Fusiliers on the west canal bank ; the relief took place on the 26th and until the 29th the Battalion was employed as carrying parties forming battle-dumps. All the tasks were successfully accomplished, despite heavy shelling which resulted in the deaths of five other ranks and the wounding of 2nd-Lieutenant T. G. L. Ashwell and thirty other ranks.

During this tour the Battalion for the first time encountered the new German gas shells (" mustard " gas) ; these fortunately did not cause any casualties as all ranks had been warned and the box-respirator afforded sufficient protection.

On relief the Battalion moved into bivouac in a wood near Canada Farm and finished the month there.

None of the three Battalions was employed on the opening day of the battle and they remained nominally where they were for most of the first week in August, many working and carrying parties being found on the canal bank and in the forward area.

It will be recalled that the second stage of the Third Battle of Ypres was scheduled for August 16th. In preparation for this on August 6th the 20th Division relieved the 38th, the 61st Brigade taking over the outpost line. On August 7th, Major-General T. G. Matheson was invalidated, owing to gas-poisoning, and on the 9th Major-General Douglas-Smith returned to the command of the division. On the night of the 7th the 59th Brigade relieved the 61st.

* " The task before the Division was to capture Langemarck. The line held, on taking over the right sector of the XIVth Corps front, extended for one thousand yards along the west bank of the Steenbeek, with the left flank resting on the Ypres-Staden railway. As a preliminary operation

* The History of the 20th (Light) Division. Captain V. E. Inglefield.

it was necessary to gain command of the Steenbeek valley in order to obtain ground on the far side of the stream, where the leading waves might form up for the attack. . . .

"The 29th Division on the left and the 11th Division on the right had already established a line of posts on the far side. On the front of the 20th Division there was a very strong work at Au Bon Gite, three hundred yards beyond the east bank on the Langemarck road. This was an extremely well-fortified place containing many concrete shelters. There were many other concrete blockhouses at intervals on both sides of the stream, commanding all approaches, but Au Bon Gite was the key to the enemy's defences in this sector."

After the relief on August 7th the Eleventh Battalion was holding the front line of the brigade sector in depth between the Steenbeek and the road running through Iron Cross; the Tenth Battalion was on the west bank of the canal. The Eleventh Battalion was heavily shelled during the relief, Lieutenant J. E. S. Green and 2nd-Lieutenant Watson being wounded, the latter remaining at duty. At the same time the Battalion had its first experience of mustard gas.

On the night of the 8th the Eleventh Battalion was ordered to establish three posts on the far bank of the Steenbeek; owing to opposition only one post, on the right, could be established, but the 11th Division on the right managed to establish posts on the east bank of the stream. After two days of considerable shelling the Battalion was relieved and went back to dug-outs in the canal bank, where it was employed carrying to the front line.

On the 11th the Tenth Battalion moved up into the support line between Jolie Farm and Stray Farm and on the 12th relieved the 10th Bn. 60th in the front line: the latter had, on the 11th, tried to establish posts beyond the Steenbeek but with no greater success than the Eleventh Battalion on the 8th. That night "B" Company secured the line of the Steenbeek by digging a chain of eight posts some one hundred yards west of the stream.

It had been decided that an attack would take place on the morning of the 14th, having as its object the crossing of the Steenbeek and occupation of the ground approximately two hundred yards beyond it. For this purpose the Tenth Battalion was to be employed with two companies of the Eleventh attached; the whole under the command of Lieut.-Colonel L. H. W. Troughton, M.C., of the Tenth Battalion.

In preparation for the attack, on the 13th, the forward posts of the latter battalion were withdrawn to enable the heavy artillery to bombard the objective; in this it was very successful, several direct hits on "pill-boxes" being observed. On the same night the Eleventh Battalion moved

up to the front line ready to take its part in the next morning's attack which was due to start at 4 a.m.

The Tenth and
Eleventh
Battalions.
The Steenbeek and
Au Bon Gite.
August 14th-17th,
1917.

By 3.0 a.m., August 14th, the six companies of the two battalions taking part in the attack were formed up along a tape two hundred and fifty yards west of and parallel to the Steenbeek.

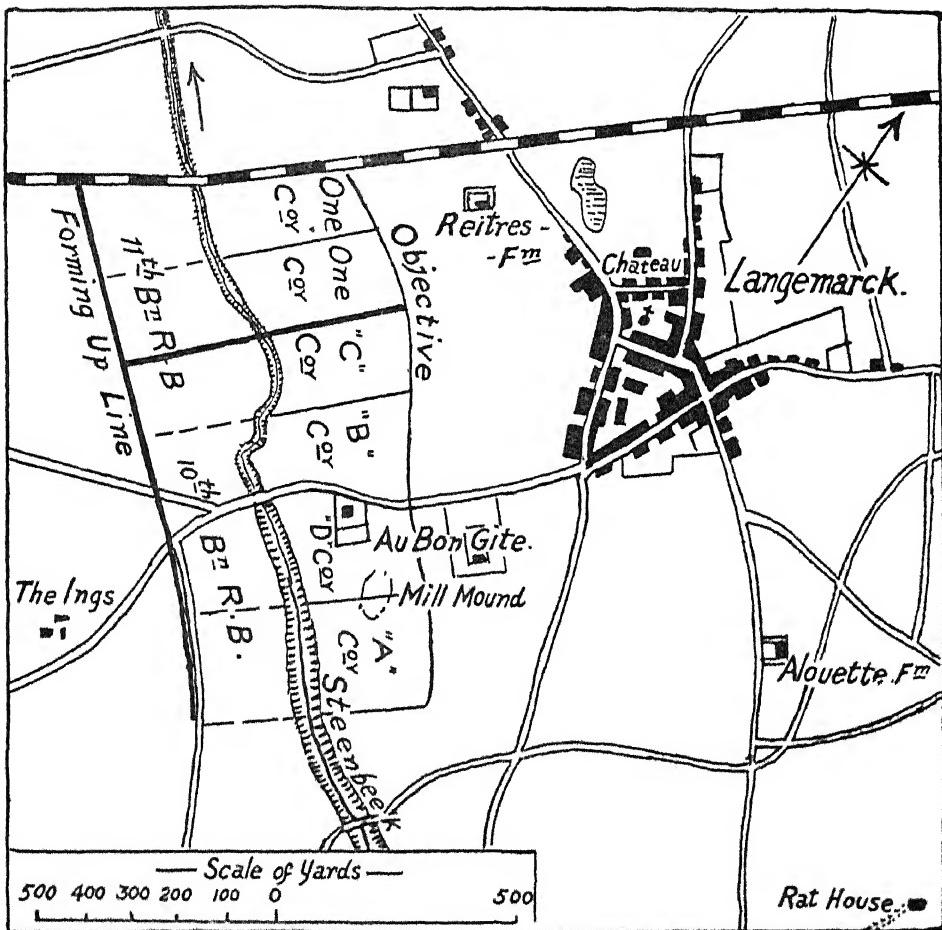
All six companies were in line, the two of the Eleventh Battalion on the left and then successively "C," "B," "D," "A," of the Tenth Battalion. Companies were each on a two-platoon front, the two rear platoons being destined for mopping up between the Steenbeek and the objective which was some two hundred yards beyond.

At 4.0 a.m. the attack started and a well-directed barrage was laid down on the east bank of the Steenbeek. The enemy immediately opened out with fairly heavy machine-gun fire, but his barrage was not excessive. Considerable difficulty was experienced in crossing the Steenbeek as the bridges carried up by the assaulting troops were found to be too short in some places and the men had to ford the stream, the bed of which was extremely muddy. Casualties from shell and machine-gun fire were unfortunately heavy, especially in the right company of the Tenth Battalion; the three left companies encountered only disorganized opposition but suffered fairly heavily, particularly in officers. The three right companies were much troubled by the blockhouse at Au Bon Gite. The Mill Mound at this point was reached and captured, but behind it was a solid concrete structure practically untouched by our bombardment and, to the right of that and connected with it by a trench, were four dug-outs, also of concrete. These four smaller dug-outs were mopped up without much difficulty but the larger structure behind the mill could not be captured.

Gallant efforts were made to force the block-house and the Riflemen were all around it, some men on top of it, but the Germans inside closed a strong iron door and all efforts to dislodge them were useless. Finally Captain Slade's company of the Eleventh Battalion was forced to dig in some twenty yards west of Au Bon Gite and partly encircling it. Along the rest of the line the objective was reached and by 6.0 a.m. consolidation was in progress. Unfortunately by this time all the company commanders had become casualties and "B" and "C" Companies of the Tenth Battalion were without any officers at all. The two remaining companies of the Eleventh Battalion were ordered up to reinforce the two right companies of the Tenth and succeeded in doing so, though not without casualties.

The remainder of the day and night was spent in consolidation and the 15th passed uneventfully for the Tenth Battalion. On the right of the

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.



THE ATTACK OF THE TENTH AND ELEVENTH BATTALIONS

ON

THE STEENBEEK AND AU BON GITE.

14th-17th August, 1917.

Eleventh Battalion the enemy counter-attacked at 5.0 a.m., the 11th Division having withdrawn the garrisons of some posts to enable the heavy artillery to shell certain obstructive strong points ; the counter-attack was repulsed with heavy losses to the enemy.

The two battalions continued in the line until the 60th and 61st Brigades passed through them in the main attack on Langemarck the next day.

It may be convenient to record here that the mopping-up of Au Bon Gite was left to the Eleventh Battalion ; Captain H. A. Slade's company had a revenge that must have been very sweet when it captured the place with thirty prisoners, including six officers and two machine-guns.

After the attack had passed on the two battalions were moved out, first to camp near Brielen, and on the 17th by rail from Elverdinghe to camps near Proven.

" During this period," says the Eleventh Battalion Diary, " the weather conditions and the state of the ground surpassed anything yet experienced by this Battalion, even in winter on the Somme."

The Twelfth Battalion.
Eagle Trench.
August 16th-17th,
1917.

* On August 5th the Twelfth Battalion moved by rail from Proven to bivouacs near Dawson's Corner, about half-way between Elverdinghe and Brielen. " There are about twenty bivouacs per company and every officers' mess has a big tarpaulin as head-cover. With numerous 4.5 ammunition boxes and sundry pieces of timber, etc., which we found in close proximity to our camp, the place was soon made quite comfortable."

Many working and carrying parties were found from here and eventually, on the 14th, the Twelfth Battalion moved up to its assembly place for the battle. This was in Candle Trench and about Glimpse Cottage in the old British front line.

The 20th Division was to attack with the 60th Brigade on the right and the 61st on the left, Langemarck itself being opposite the latter brigade. The advance was to be made in three bounds. The first bound was to the Blue Line which ran along the western border of Langemarck and then turned back south-eastwards in front of the 60th Brigade : here there was to be a pause of twenty minutes. The second bound was to the Green Line about five hundred yards further back and here there was to be a pause of one hour. The third and final advance was to be to the Red Line some seven hundred yards further still and coinciding with an enemy trench known as Eagle Trench. For the attack the battalions of the 60th Brigade were disposed as follows :—

* Map will be found on p. 123.

The Blue and Green Lines were the objective of the 6th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry with one company ("B") of the Twelfth Battalion, attached as moppers up. The Red Line was the objective of the remaining two battalions whilst the Twelfth Battalion (less the above company) was in brigade reserve.

On August 16th, zero hour, it will be remembered, was at 4.45 a.m.:

All went well with the attack, the Blue and Green Lines falling according to plan and yielding some eighty prisoners.

The action of the Eleventh Battalion at Au Bon Gite has already been described.

The Red Line was attacked with great success on the 60th Brigade front and the 61st Brigade also reached its final objective. On the right, however, the 11th Division had been hung up about the Green Line, except for a liaison post which was forward on the Red Line at White House on the inter-divisional boundary. The effect of this was that the line ran west of Rat House on the flank and rear of the 60th Brigade.

At 9.40 a.m. an aeroplane report was received with the information that, at 8.0 a.m., an enemy division was concentrating two thousand yards east of Langemarck, near Poelcapelle. In consequence of this the Twelfth Battalion received orders to move to the dead ground east of the Steenbeek and to be prepared to assist in holding, at all costs, the Red and Green Lines either when ordered or, if necessary, without orders. "C" Company had already been ordered forward to form a bridge-head near Au Bon Gite and now H.Q. and "A" Company moved forward and dug in in support of the 6th O. and B.L.I. holding the Blue Line. "D" Company was employed as a carrying party. From 12 noon until 3 p.m. there was heavy shelling which caused twenty casualties in "A" Company.

At about 5.15 p.m. a serjeant of the 12th Bn. 60th was brought to Battalion H.Q. by the staff captain; he reported that the right battalion of the 61st Brigade had fallen back, that the left company of his battalion had been annihilated, that the other companies had fallen back, and that ammunition was running short. The 6th Bn. K.S.L.I. was also asking for ammunition. To the latter battalion a few men of Battalion H.Q. and of "C" Company took up ammunition and bombs. The remainder of Battalion H.Q. and such men of various units as could be collected were sent forward under the provost-serjeant to dig in on the left of "A" Company, covering the western exits of Langemarck.

At 8.0 p.m. a message was received from Brigade H.Q. stating that the left of the 12th Bn. 60th was turned and that the right of the 6th K.S.L.I. (on their right) might also be falling back. "A" and "C" Companies

were consequently ordered to move forward and ensure the safety of the Green Line. "A" Company at first joined "B" Company in the Blue Line whilst "C" Company reported to the O.C. 6th Bn. K.S.L.I., at Alouette Farm. Colonel Riley, having gone forward to find out the situation, ordered "A" Company into the Green Line on the left of the brigade front. The O.C. 6th K.S.L.I. told Colonel Riley that everything was all right and that none of his battalion had moved but that the left and centre of the 12th Bn. 60th had fallen back to connect with the right of the 61st Brigade; the 6th Bn. K.S.L.I. was in touch with the left of the 34th Brigade, 11th Division, but the latter's line ran back at right angles. It was arranged that two platoons of "C" Company should be moved forward to the Red Line to strengthen the right flank of the K.S.L.I. and that company was led up to Alouette Farm by Captain Rissik through a bog; by 1.0 a.m. on the 17th the two platoons were in position and "A" Company was digging in in the Green Line with a post in touch with the 61st Brigade. The remainder of "C" Company was in reserve to the 6th K.S.L.I., near Alouette Farm, and advanced Battalion H.Q. was with the 6th K.S.L.I. in the farm.

During the morning of the next day, August 17th, there was intermittent shelling along the Langemarck-Alouette Farm road and occasional heavy barrages along the line of the Steenbeek.

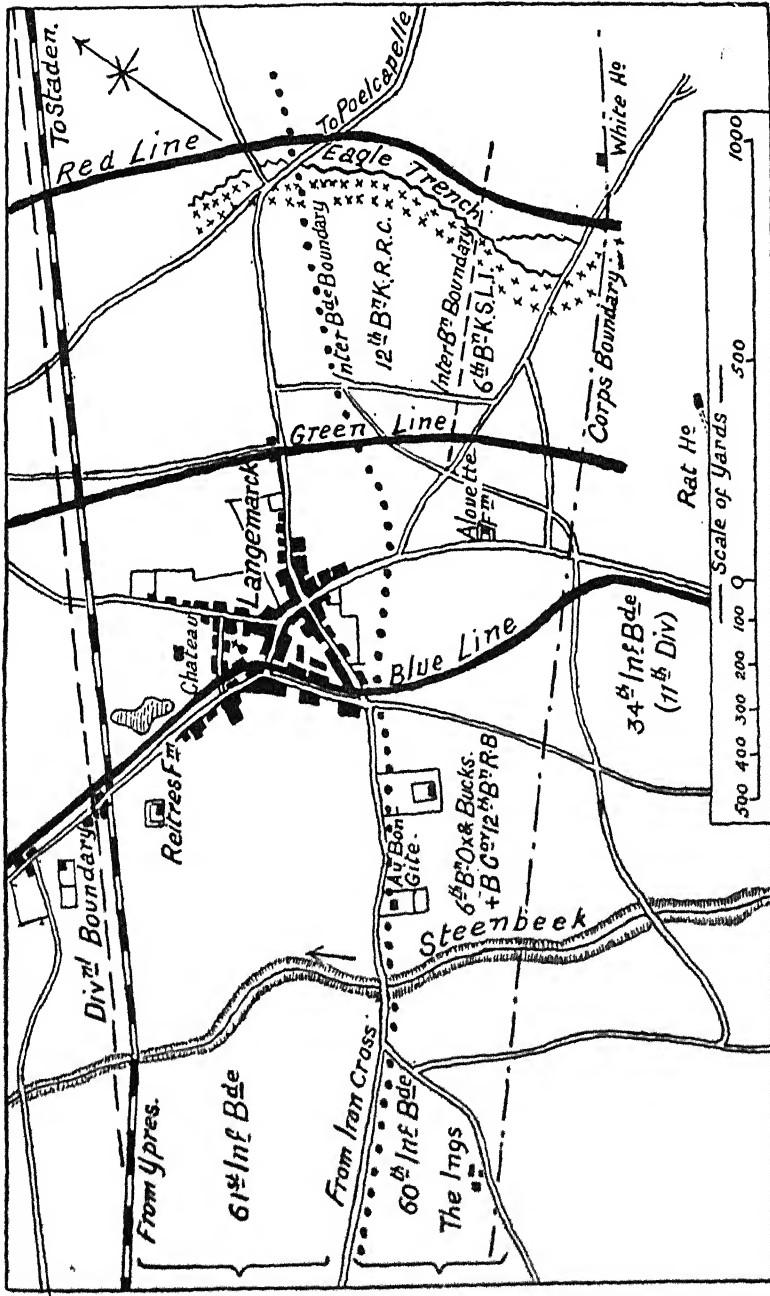
"D" Company came up and dug in near Au Bon Gite; snipers were very active from the direction of Rat House, six hundred yards from Alouette Farm.

At about 1.0 p.m. the Brigadier, General Butler, arrived at Alouette Farm and arranged for an attack to be delivered by part of the Battalion, in conjunction with the 61st Brigade, with the object of recapturing Eagle Trench. There was to be a barrage for half an hour from 6.30 to 7.0 p.m. on Eagle Trench, during which the attacking troops would move forward from the Langemarck-Alouette Farm road and form up under the barrage. The 11th Division was to be asked to deal with Rat House and neighbourhood.

At about 4.0 p.m. a message was received that the enemy appeared to be collecting for counter-attack on the left of the 6th K.S.L.I., but nothing transpired and, at the appointed hour, the troops detailed for the attack were formed up. These, in the Twelfth Battalion, consisted of "B" Company on the right (one officer and forty other ranks), "A" Company on the left (two officers and eighty other ranks), and two platoons of "D" Company (two officers and forty-five other ranks) in support. The distance to the objective was about nine hundred yards.

At three minutes past zero both lines moved off and three minutes later

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.



THE ATTACK OF THE TWELFTH BATTALION ON EAGLE TRENCH.

16th August, 1917.

the enemy barrage came down on both sides of the Langemarck-Alouette Farm road—too late to catch the lines.

Two 5.9 shells, however, fell near the leading line, causing six to eight casualties ; otherwise shell-fire did little damage during the advance.

Immediately the leading line left the shelter of the buildings and hedges on the road sniping began from the direction of Rat House and soon afterwards a machine-gun opened fire from the same quarter. There was also machine-gun and rifle fire from in front. Casualties soon became heavy and the right of the line could get no further forward than fifty to a hundred yards in front of the line held by the 12th Bn. 60th ; a few men of the left company advanced a little further forward but the company by now had lost both officers and seventy per cent. of other ranks including all but three non-commissioned officers. A large proportion of the wounded were hit in the right side and back. Total casualties during the attack were four officers (one killed—three dangerously wounded) out of five and a hundred other ranks out of one hundred and sixty-five.

It was an exceptionally clear afternoon and the lines were right on the sky-line.

After dark the O.C. 12th Bn. 60th arranged to establish posts on the line reached and the survivors of the attack turned to to search the ground for wounded.

Next day, the 18th, the 60th Brigade was to be relieved by troops of the 38th Division and, according to the Battalion Diary, throughout the day "there was the usual stream of visitors to Alouette Farm (a show place) and corresponding efforts on the part of the Rat House snipers, without much result." However, it was considered advisable to mark out a safe route to avoid these pests. That evening "our heavies" dropped several shells in and around the front line, causing over twenty casualties to the 6th Bn. K.S.L.I. and killing two of "C" Company, the Twelfth Battalion. That night the ground was again searched for wounded and seven stretcher-cases were brought in before the Battalion was relieved and moved back to Dawson's Corner.

The casualties in the three Battalions had been heavy during this tour.

In the Tenth Battalion, of officers, seven were killed—Captains B. W. Edwards and C. Knowles-Irvine, Lieutenant M. Hemmant, 2nd-Lieutenants G. E. Martin, G. A. Curnock, M. G. H. Chapman and T. R. Grosvenor ; 2nd-Lieutenant R. Moore died of wounds ; Lieutenant W. Buckworth was wounded and missing, while 2nd Lieutenants J. A. Talbot, W. J. Drinkwater, R. Edwards, J. M. Ball, E. Trapnell, S. J. Pegler and E. Bidwell were wounded, but remained at duty. Lieut.-Colonel L. H. W. Troughton and

Captain and Adjutant T. H. Henderson were wounded (gas) but remained at duty. Of other ranks twenty-four were killed or died of wounds, one hundred and seventy-two wounded (of whom seventeen remained at duty) and thirteen missing.

In the Eleventh Battalion, apart from those already mentioned, no names are given in the casualty list : the Diary contents itself with recording as battle casualties eighteen officers (of whom eleven remained at duty) and three hundred and twelve other ranks. Subsequently Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Cotton, Captain C. P. Warren and 2nd-Lieutenant H. T. Widgery were evacuated, suffering from the after-effects of gas.

In the Twelfth Battalion 2nd-Lieutenant G. Morris and thirty-one other ranks were killed : Captains W. C. Messenger and C. W. Tait (at duty), Lieutenant B. W. Hall, 2nd-Lieutenants N. R. Clark, W. Colson, B. B. Wastell, J. L. Rapoport, W. C. Milner, R. D. Gibson, A. V. Hughes, A. R. Holliday and one hundred and forty-eight other ranks were wounded and seven other ranks were missing.

On August 19th the Twelfth Battalion marched to Elverdinghe and thence by rail followed the other two to camp near Proven.

CHAPTER V

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.

ACTION OF THE 14th DIVISION. SEVENTH, EIGHTH, AND
NINTH BATTALIONS.

AFTERMATH OF THE SECOND STAGE. AUGUST 18TH-28TH, 1917.

OPERATIONS UP TO NOVEMBER 10TH, 1917.

FROM August 1st to the 4th the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Battalions remained near Berthen at one hour's notice to move, so little training could be carried out. On the 4th the embargo was removed and on the 6th the Seventh and Eighth Battalions marched to the Hondeghem area and the Ninth to Borre—all near Hazebrouck. There for the next ten days training was carried out whilst Hazebrouck was both bombed at night and shelled by day by a German naval gun: a direct hit with a bomb on "A" Company's, Eighth Battalion, billet, wounded eleven other ranks.

On the 11th the Eighth Battalion held a drill competition, each company being represented by one platoon. Major-General Victor Couper judged and "C" Company won.

The 13th was a sad day for this Battalion; officers and men who originally came out with the Battalion attended at Loker the funeral of their first Commanding Officer, Brig.-General "Ronnie" MacLachlan, who had been killed whilst in command of the 110th Brigade, in the 37th Division.*

During this period the 42nd Brigade sustained the loss of its Brigadier, Brig.-General F. A. Dudgeon, on promotion to command of the 56th Division, after two years in command of the brigade; he was succeeded by Brig.-General G. N. B. Forster, D.S.O.

On August 15th all three Battalions moved; the Seventh and Eighth were railed to Ouderdom and thence marched to camp at Dickebusch whilst the Ninth moved by bus and marched to Ouderdom, where it remained during the 16th at one hour's notice. On this day the two other Battalions were hurriedly moved up towards the line but, not being required, spent the night at Chateau Segard.

* Referred to in the Thirteenth Battalion account on p. 153.

Next day, the 17th, the Seventh and Ninth Battalions moved up into the front line and the Eighth to brigade reserve at Zillebeke Bund.

It is now necessary to examine the reason for these movements of the 14th Division and the three Battalions of the Regiment which it contained.

It will be recalled that in the opening stage of the Third Battle of Ypres fortunes had varied, the southernmost troops of the Fifth Army meeting with stronger opposition than those in the north.*

In the second stage, on August 16th, events had taken a very similar course and once more it was the unfortunate troops on the right which had met with the most determined resistance. † And it was here that the 14th Division was now put into the line to reap the aftermath.

On the night of August 17th/18th, the 41st Brigade on the right relieved the 53rd Brigade of the 18th Division with, in the front line, the Seventh Battalion on the right and the 7th Bn. 60th on the left; in support, the 8th Bn. 60th and, in reserve, the Eighth Battalion at Zillebeke Bund. The frontage taken over was (inclusive) the road running due south from Clapham Junction (on the Menin Road), to where the road turns south-west. On the left was the 42nd Brigade, which continued the line northwards to the Westhoek-Zonnebeke road at a point some five hundred yards north-east of Westhoek; the 5th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry was on the right and the Ninth Battalion on the left in front line and the two remaining battalions in support—each to a front-line battalion. The 8th Division was on the left.

During this tour the Seventh Battalion was engaged in consolidating and linking up into a sketchy trench system, a series of shell-hole posts, and also in endeavouring to push out more advanced shell-hole posts. Inverness Copse was patrolled, one notable patrol by A/Corporals Gascoigne and Feld penetrating the enemy's outer defences.

The line Clapham Junction—Stirling Castle was continually under heavy barrage, as also were the back areas. On the 20th the Battalion was relieved and went back to camp at Dickebusch, having lost six other ranks killed and 2nd-Lieutenants T. S. Lea, W. H. Shooert, W. Woodhead, G. N. Reaval and thirty-five other ranks wounded. The 21st was spent in reorganization.

Meanwhile the Eighth Battalion had a comparatively peaceful time at Zillebeke Bund until relieved on the 20th, when it moved to Dickebusch, having lost four other ranks wounded.

The Ninth Battalion had relieved "remnants of the 56th Division" in advanced posts on the forward slope of Westhoek Ridge. Enemy shelling

* Vide p. 109.

† Map will be found on p. 137.

was heavy and part of Battalion H.Q. on the Menin Road was blown in ; there was also considerable gas-shelling which caused some casualties, including Captain A. M. Rosevear and 2nd-Lieutenant V. Jones on the 19th. On the night of the 20th the Battalion was relieved and moved back to Ritz dug-out and trenches near by (just south of Half Way House), having lost 2nd-Lieutenant W. T. Wright wounded and suffered some fifty other casualties.

The 14th Division.
Inverness Copse
and Glencorse
Wood.
August 22nd-28th,
1917.

These movements were preliminary to an attack which the 14th Division had been ordered to make and which took place on August 22nd.

The objective was to be a "Green Line" running from Jasper Avenue, at the southern point of the divisional line, eastwards to round Herenthage Chateau, thence northwards through Fitzclarence Farm, then north-north-west through Glencorse Wood to the most northerly point of that wood. The assaulting brigades were to be the 43rd, on the right, and the 42nd, with the 41st in reserve. In the 43rd Brigade the 6th Bn. Somerset L.I. (plus one company 10th Bn. D.L.I.) would assault on the right with the 6th Bn. D.C.L.I. on the left having as their task the capture of Inverness Copse and the open ground between that and Glencorse Wood as far as the line of Fitzclarence Farm. In the 42nd Brigade the assaulting battalion was the 5th Bn. K.S.L.I., which was to capture the western portion of Glencorse Wood.

Four tanks were detailed to assist in the attack and were given special objectives. The assaulting troops were on no account to delay their advance to wait for the tanks.

When the action began the Seventh and Eighth Battalions were still in camp at Dickebusch. The Ninth Battalion, still at Ritz dug-out, on the night of the 21st, in company with neighbouring battery positions, was heavily shelled, a large proportion of gas-shells being included. Despite the utmost expedition in assuming box-respirators many gas-casualties occurred and the total of casualties, including gassed, was sixty-three.

It has been thought advisable to record thus elaborately the preliminary dispositions of the troops for the reason that, by the time the operations had concluded, the original brigade front areas had become common to practically every battalion in the 41st Brigade. Further than that, the battalions became broken up so that half-companies of a battalion were fighting under the orders of different brigadiers. Therefore, there will not, there cannot, be further elaboration in the story of these events ; considerations of space alone preclude it.

At zero hour (7.0 a.m.), August 22nd, the assaulting troops moved

forward. On the right all went well and the 6th Bn. Somerset L.I., with its attached company of the 10th Bn. D.L.I., reached the objective, not without some stiff fighting.

In the centre the 6th Bn. D.C.L.I. was held up almost at once by machine-gun fire from the front between Inverness Copse and Glencorse Wood. The arrival of a tank enabled this battalion to capture and occupy the northern portion of a trench which was, however, still some four hundred yards short of the objective. The 5th Bn. K.S.L.I. on the left quickly reached its objective except on the right where its line bent back to connect with the left of the centre battalion.

From 8.15 a.m. onwards there was a gradual absorption of troops by the 43rd Brigade. By 10.20 a.m. the three companies of the 10th Bn. D.L.I. reinforced successively the now hard-pressed 6th Bn. Somerset L.I. in Inverness Copse and their place was taken by the 6th Bn. K.O.Y.L.I. moved up from Sanctuary Wood.

By 11.0 a.m. the line held in Inverness Copse ran north and south about two hundred yards from the west edge and shortly before this the 41st Brigade was ordered to send a battalion to Zillebeke Bund where it would come under the 43rd Brigade; on arrival this battalion (8th Bn. 60th) was ordered forward to Sanctuary Wood and at 12.20 p.m. the Eighth Battalion moved to Zillebeke Bund to replace it. During the afternoon concentrations of the enemy were dispersed by artillery fire and an attack on the right was beaten off by small-arms fire; but three companies of the 6th Bn. K.O.Y.L.I. had by now become involved in the fight so the 8th Bn. 60th (41st Brigade) was ordered to relieve one company of the 6th Bn. K.O.Y.L.I. and one company of the 5th O. and B.L.I. (lent earlier by the 42nd Brigade) in the original front line of the 43rd Brigade.

At the end of the day the line held ran from rather beyond the south-west corner of Inverness Copse to near the centre of the north edge of the copse; thence it turned back sharply westwards to an enemy trench three hundred yards from the old front line; thence for three hundred yards due north and thence north-eastwards to the Green Line which it then followed to the northern divisional boundary.

There had at one time been a probability of the Eighth Battalion and the 8th Bn. 60th being moved into the line this night with a view to an attack at 4.0 a.m. This, however, was over-ruled by the 14th Division and the Battalion stayed where it was at Zillebeke Bund, but still under the orders of the 43rd Brigade. The Seventh Battalion had once more been moved at very short notice to Chateau Segard, but, not being required, bivouacked there for the night.

The Ninth Battalion remained at Ritz dug-out in reserve to the 42nd

Brigade, whose H.Q. at the same place were bombed, resulting in fifteen casualties, the Battalion also suffering nine casualties.

August 23rd, 1917. On August 23rd, an early morning attack with tanks had been arranged to capture the remainder of the Green Line but, owing to anti-tank gunfire and the state of the ground, only one tank managed to get beyond the line of the infantry and reached its objective, near Fitzclarence Farm. Soon after this the enemy delivered a strong counter-attack on our front between Inverness Copse and Glencorse Wood but this was broken up by small-arms fire assisted nobly by the one tank.

It had been intended to relieve the 43rd Brigade with the 41st Brigade on this night and orders had actually been issued ; these, however, were cancelled, the 14th Division having received orders from the IIInd Corps to hold the 41st Brigade in readiness for a further operation.

In order to release the 8th Bn. 60th of the 41st Brigade, now with the 43rd Brigade, the 42nd Brigade was ordered to relieve it this night with a battalion.

So the situation on the evening of the 23rd was that the 43rd and 42nd Brigades were still in the line but that the latter brigade was relieving a battalion of the 41st Brigade which was under the 43rd. The Ninth Battalion, at Ritz dug-out, was to have relieved the 9th Bn. 60th of its own brigade on this night but was now deputed to relieve the 8th Bn. 60th which would bring it under the 43rd Brigade. The latter battalion was to drop back to Zillebeke Bund, there relieving the Eighth Battalion which would then go back to Dickebusch.

During this day the Seventh Battalion had remained at Chateau Segard but eventually, after various orders and counter-orders, moved back to Dickebusch during the night.

Events during the night of the 23rd/24th and on the early morning of the 24th did little to simplify the situation.

The Ninth Battalion. Owing to late receipt of the new orders and heavy shelling the leading platoon of the Ninth Battalion could not leave Ritz dug-out trenches until 12.30 a.m. on the 24th ; as it was twenty-eight casualties were incurred.

August 24th, 1917. The position to be occupied was in the old front line in support from a point midway between Stirling Castle and Inverness Copse to midway between Clapham Junction and Glencorse Wood ; an offensive flank was to be formed also eastwards from the former point to just inside Inverness Copse.

Shelling was heavy and continuous and remained so for many hours and the relief was not complete before the first enemy counter-attack about

dawn and there was some intermingling of the two battalions. However all troops north of the Menin Road were relieved, and some of the troops south of the road.

The following account is taken from Colonel Pickering's report on the operations.

"Owing to heavy casualties during the preceding five days my Battalion went up to relieve as follows:—

1 company (3 strong platoons) to take over north of the Menin Road.

1 weak company (2 strong made-up platoons) in reserve near Stirling Castle.

1 made-up company (4 strong platoons) to hold the support line south of the Menin Road and the right offensive flank.

"The whole of the support line came into position before dawn and, though the two platoons detailed were not sufficient to man the whole line, the gaps were soon filled by men of other units. The two strong platoons were apparently not correctly guided and did not get up until the enemy attack had begun,* with the result that some platoons of the 8th Bn. 60th were not relieved and remained holding their positions; so my two platoons took up a position in a line of shell-holes south of Jasper Avenue (i.e. near the offensive flank). H.Q. of the 8th Bn. 60th also remained in the line.

"Meanwhile Captain N. E. Lee, 8th Bn. 60th, although having been relieved, thinking the situation serious, kept his two platoons near Stirling Castle, finally sending them up as ordered by me to fill up the gaps in the old front line. Shortly afterwards this officer was unfortunately killed and his platoons reduced to a total of ten other ranks.

"About this time, under the orders of the O.C. 6th Bn. K.O.Y.L.I., my reserve platoons were sent to reinforce the 6th Bn. Somerset L.I.; one platoon on right of old front line and one platoon forward—well into the heart of Inverness Copse: this platoon, which went over thirty-six strong, never left Inverness Copse though it was reduced to a serjeant and four men. This serjeant, Willey by name, collected a few stragglers of other battalions and held a post at the north end of the copse, but south of the Menin Road, until relieved."

All the morning the fight in Inverness Copse swayed back and forth; three times the troops in front were driven out and three times they reformed and went forward again. There was a great dearth of officers and Colonel Pickering, having lost three out of his four, dared not lend his one remaining officer elsewhere without risking the loss of the support line which was his Battalion's charge. Reinforcements were called for on three

* The attacking force was said to be a Prussian "Sturm" battalion.

occasions by different units but all that could be spared was a scratch platoon made up of every available rifle at Battalion H.Q. and the aid post.

The enemy, in the meanwhile, had established himself in the trench connecting Inverness Copse with Glencorse Wood (the Bone of Contention previously mentioned), from which he sent out bombing-parties, all of which were beaten back.

The position on the north of the Menin Road was a strong one with a fine field of fire and had the enemy advanced from the west edge of Inverness Copse he would have suffered high casualties. (This was earnestly hoped for by the company north of the Menin Road which was "fairly on its toes.") At one time the situation seemed serious as, although there were probably sufficient men in the sector to stop the enemy from getting a foothold in our old front line, they were very scattered in shell-holes and there were no officers left to rally and re-organize them.

"It was then," said Colonel Pickering, "that we held a conference between O.C.s 10th Bn. D.L.I., 6th Bn. D.C.L.I. (both of the 43rd Brigade), 8th Bn. 60th (41st Brigade) and Ninth Battalion (42nd Brigade); it was decided that with the present troops, who had suffered heavily in casualties, at our disposal, it was impossible to turn the enemy out of his trench and be sure of having sufficient left to hold the old front line should our counter-attack prove unsuccessful. The freshest troops to do this counter-attack were those of my Battalion and we had none other with which to garrison the old front line in their place; also owing to the very heavy shelling and machine-gun fire it was impossible to transfer troops from south to north of the Menin Road, without suffering very heavy casualties.

"It was essential too that the ridge be held at all costs and the continued bombardment led one to expect further attacks."

The account pays a tribute to the work of the brigade carrying parties and particularly to that of the runners—both regimental and brigade—who never did a trip to the front without carrying S.A.A., or bombs, as well as messages.

Two final notes are: "The enemy at one time used liquid fire but we got a Lewis-gun turned on immediately. This dispersed the operators and I believe the whole machine went up later as a very dense cloud of smoke came out of the enemy trench and seemed different from a dump going up."

Again: "The few survivors from Inverness Copse had the time of their lives, sniping and picking off Huns, not to speak of several bombing encounters."

"During the afternoon reinforcements of the Eighth Battalion arrived and, after a conference, it was decided to post them south of the Menin

Road, strengthen the line (and) offensive flank, and push forward posts into Inverness Copse while one platoon, being overcrowded, spread up north of the Menin Road.

"Later the 7th Bn. 60th and Seventh Battalion came up to relieve all troops in this sector. I made myself responsible for relief of all troops north of the Menin Road while O.C. 10th Bn. D.L.I. and O.C. Eighth Battalion handed over all south of the Menin Road. My relief was complete by 3.30 a.m. on the 25th when I proceeded to Zillebeke Bund."

The Eighth
Battalion.

August 24th, 1917. It is now necessary to go back to the early hours of the 24th and trace the consequences of the uncompleted relief of the 8th Bn. 60th when H.Q. and one and a half companies remained in the line.

During the night of the 23rd/24th the Eighth Battalion, at Zillebeke Bund, was expecting relief by the 8th Bn. 60th and eventually, as has been seen, only two and a half companies arrived. The relief, however, was carried out so far as was possible and "C," * "D" and half "A" Companies of the Eighth Battalion marched back to Dickebusch, leaving at the Bund Battalion H.Q., "B" and half "A" Companies with the two and a half companies 8th Bn. 60th.

At 1.10 p.m. orders were received for all troops at the Bund to reinforce the original front line. Accordingly, Colonel Prideaux-Brune took up the composite battalion to report to O.C. 10th Bn. D.L.I. at Clapham Junction. The move was made through an intense barrage and 2nd-Lieutenant W. W. Wines was killed, Captain B. H. Bennett, 2nd-Lieutenant T. D. England and about forty other ranks being wounded. Captain C. E. Squire with half "A" Company and 2nd-Lieutenants W. N. Sproston and T. D. England with their platoons of "C" Company were ordered to re-occupy the western edge of Inverness Copse. They were held up by machine-gun fire about three hundred yards short of the wood where they occupied a line of shell-holes astride the Menin Road and parallel to the western edge of the copse. Here 2nd-Lieutenant England was wounded—apparently for the second time that afternoon.

At dusk 2nd-Lieutenant W. N. Sproston with both platoons of "C" Company re-occupied the western edge of the copse and consolidated. A right flank (referred to this time as "defensive") was formed along Jasper Avenue manned by representatives of all battalions in the 43rd Brigade—at this time apparently seven in number—to join hands with the 24th Division on the right.

* This is presumably an error in the Battalion War Diary and "B" Company intended; "C" Company appears with the H.Q. party.

At 3.0 a.m. H.Q. and the one and a half companies, Eighth Battalion, were relieved by the Seventh Battalion and returned to the Bund.

The Seventh and
Eighth Battalions.
August 24th, 1917.

Once more it is desirable to turn back to the 24th to follow the movements of the 41st Brigade—less those elements whose story has been covered up to the early hours of the 25th.

At mid-day on the 24th the 41st Brigade from Dickebusch, executing a manœuvre similar to a "change of base," moved by lorry to a position of readiness near the Ecole—outside the Menin Gate: the Brigade now consisting of the two 7th Battalions and the errant two and a half companies of the Eighth Battalion commanded by Lieutenant W. A. Crebbin, M.C. Whilst there orders were received placing the two 7th Battalions at the disposal of the 43rd Brigade and the two and a half companies of the Eighth Battalion at the disposal of the 42nd Brigade. In due course that evening the two 7th Battalions were ordered up to take over the front line held by the 43rd Brigade and the two and a half companies of the Eighth Battalion that of the 42nd Brigade.

The Seventh and
Eighth Battalions.
August 25th, 1917.

So, having arrived back at the early morning of August 25th, the occasion is convenient to take stock of the situation. The Ninth Battalion on this morning was moved to the Ecole, and thence later to the Café Belge where it was embussed and moved to camp at Wippenhoek. It had finished with these operations and may well be left there for the present.

At 6.0 a.m. the H.Q. 41st Brigade relieved the H.Q. 43rd Brigade at Dormy House—just east of Zillebeke.

The position now was that the two 7th Battalions were holding the original sectors on the brigade front, occupied by them on August 17th, and the two and a half companies, Eighth Battalion, the original right sector of the 42nd Brigade front opposite Glencorse Wood, with H.Q. and one and a half companies at Zillebeke Bund.

Both the 41st and 42nd Brigades were expecting relief that night—but such was not to be. The Staff of the 70th Brigade, 23rd Division, had arrived early and all arrangements had been made for the relief when, at 3.30 p.m., orders were received from the IIInd Corps that the relief was cancelled and that the 41st Brigade was to remain at the disposal of the 23rd Division and to take over the whole divisional front supported by two battalions of the 70th Brigade. Accordingly, the 8th Bn. York and Lancaster Regt. arrived that night at Zillebeke Bund relieving the 8th Bn.

60th which returned to Chateau Segard and the 8th Bn. K.O.Y.L.I. went to Half-Way House.

The same night H.Q. and one and a half companies Eighth Battalion moved up to Hooge Tunnel and with the two and a half companies already there took over the left sector of the divisional front, with its left at the extreme northerly point of Glencorse Wood.

During that night (25th/26th), in accordance with orders from the 23rd Division the brigade established a chain of posts running in a slightly half-moon shape from the north-west corner of Inverness Copse to the south-west corner of Glencorse Wood and at 2.0 a.m. attempted to establish posts in the enemy trench connecting the two—the Bone of Contention. Of these posts one was to be established by the Seventh Battalion, just August 26th, 1917. north of Inverness Copse, and was so established by "C" Company by 2.0 a.m., August 26th; an enemy counter-attack immediately developed and 2nd-Lieutenant Hosler was last seen endeavouring to repel it; he was, it was feared, killed. Meanwhile, other posts were put out, at 3.0 a.m. it is stated, and "information as to what occurred after the occupation of these posts is obscure." As far as can be ascertained confused fighting took place, posts being taken and retaken, until at 3.45 a.m. a heavy bombardment came down on our front line with an extremely severe barrage about Clapham Junction and along the Stirling Castle ridge. This continued until about 4.40 a.m. Under cover of this bombardment the enemy again attacked, capturing one post in Inverness Copse, but being repulsed by two others also in the copse.

When it was reported that the enemy had penetrated the front line the S.O.S. was sent up from Battalion H.Q. and the response was prompt and exceedingly heavy. As soon as it came down the enemy retired and made no further attack. The enemy was said to have used a form of flamme-werfer but some observers thought that it was some kind of phosphorous grenade.

Meanwhile by 2.45 a.m. the Eighth Battalion had occupied the posts ordered. In the attack just described the posts in Glencorse Wood repulsed the enemy, but one post between the wood and the copse was captured. The 7th Bn. 60th at the same time lost its left post adjoining the Eighth Battalion.

Once more, during the forenoon of this day, all arrangements were made for relief, the G.O.C. 23rd Division and his three brigadiers visiting H.Q. 41st Brigade for the purpose.

Shortly before 1 p.m., however, the Commander of the 41st Brigade (Brig.-General P. C. B. Skinner) was instructed to report as soon as possible at Divisional H.Q., and on arrival there was informed that the brigade

would not be relieved that night, but would have instead to capture the German trench connecting Inverness Copse with Glencorse Wood and previously referred to as the Bone of Contention.

At the ensuing divisional conference it was decided that the trench, on which it was impossible to place an artillery barrage and which was very strongly held, was to be captured by means of a tank attack and six tanks were placed at the disposal of the Brigadier 41st Brigade for this purpose. Unlike the orders for the attack of August 22nd upon this occasion it was understood clearly that the attack was to be carried out only in co-operation with the tanks and, failing the arrival of the latter, no attack would be delivered.

On the return of General Skinner to his H.Q. orders were issued and dispositions made, therefore, in this sense.

At 8.30 p.m. that evening it began to rain and poured in torrents throughout the night, transforming the whole countryside into a swamp.

At 11.30 p.m. orders were received from the corps commander that, failing the arrival of the tanks, the attack planned was to be carried out as a surprise attack before dawn. Orders were therefore hurriedly communicated to battalion commanders—it now took two hours for a runner to reach Battalion H.Q. from Brigade H.Q.—and the position was that two alternative forms of attack were contemplated, one if the tanks arrived, the other if they did not; their arrival or otherwise was to be reported to Brigade H.Q. before 4.0 a.m.

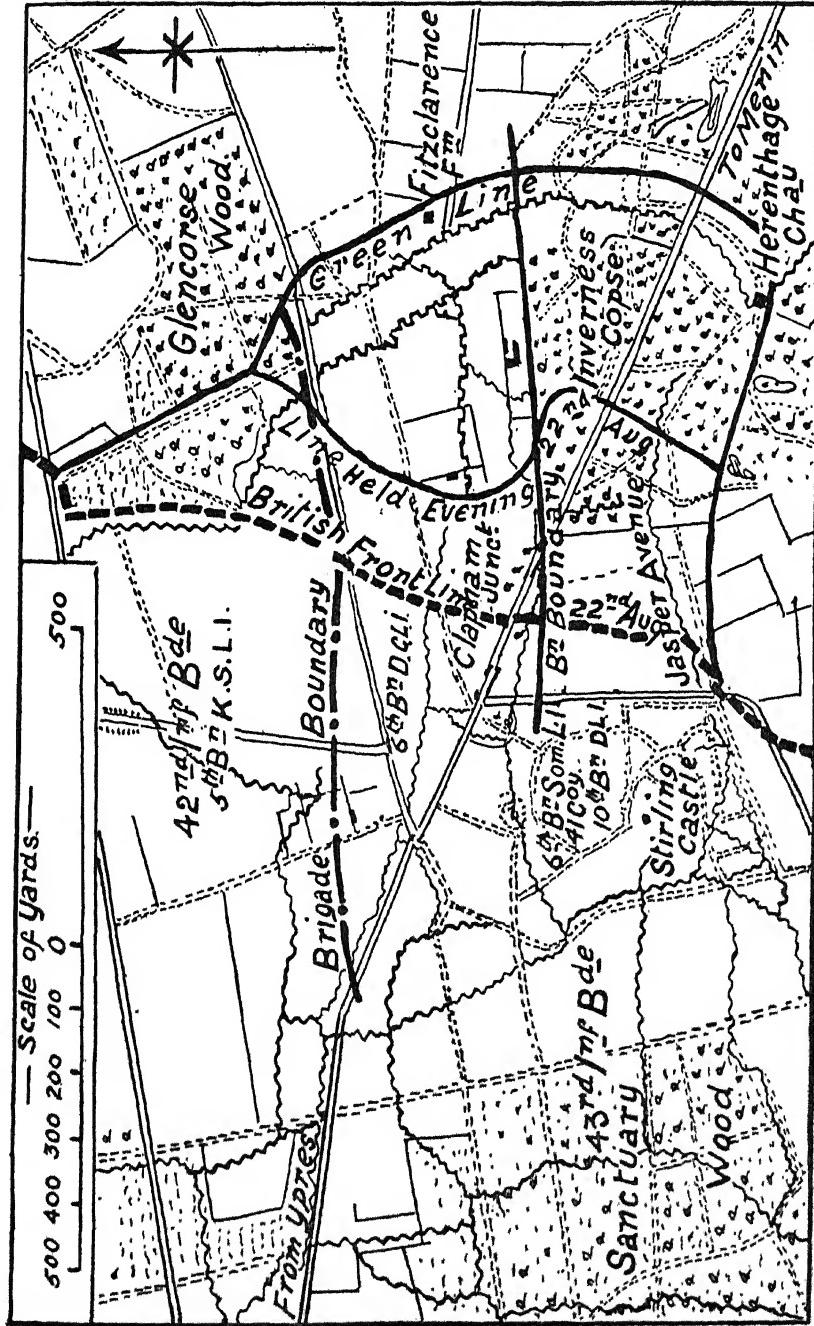
The tanks, however, arrived at their rendezvous, near August 27th, 1917. Clapham Junction, by 2.0 a.m. on the 27th, so the tank attack, as arranged, was to be carried out.

But the tanks having reached their rendezvous got no further owing to the mud, so that when the infantry were expecting them at 4.45 a.m., August 27th, to begin the attack, they did not appear. It was now getting too light for a surprise attack so that the operation, as a whole, fell through.

The orders issued by the 41st Brigade for the tank attack gave the route to be taken by each tank and the Seventh Battalion was ordered to detail a bombing squad to accompany each of the two right-hand tanks. In addition each battalion in front line, Seventh and Eighth Battalions with 7th Bn. 60th between them, would detail one strong platoon to attack the trench in conjunction with the tanks.

These orders were followed by a further message (received by the Seventh Battalion at 2.0 a.m., the 27th) giving effect to the corps commander's orders already referred to, and ordering that, should the tanks not arrive, the trenches were to be carried by a surprise attack at dawn. The message

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.



ACTION OF THE SEVENTH, EIGHTH AND NINTH BATTALIONS AT INVERNESS COSE AND GLENCOSE WOOD.

22nd-28th August, 1917.

directed that the assault would be carried out on similar lines to that arranged with tanks—except that there would be no tanks.

The three commanding officers concerned, in consultation with O.C. Tanks, agreed that the tanks could not start before 4.45 a.m. owing to insufficient light. They agreed further that if the tanks were not in sight by 5.0 a.m. that hour should be zero for the surprise assault.

Unfortunately by then there was too much light for a surprise and the assault, not unnaturally, came to naught.

In the Seventh Battalion 2nd-Lieutenant W. E. Rushbrooke, according to his orders, attacked with his platoon at zero hour. Owing to the appalling condition of the ground the platoon reached its objective piecemeal and was at once bombed out. 2nd-Lieutenant Rushbrooke re-organized the platoon in shell-holes and led it forward again but with no better results, he himself, unhappily, being killed.

In the Eighth Battalion 2nd-Lieutenant W. N. Sproston with a platoon of "C" Company was selected to make the attack. Most of the platoon became casualties on the way up to the forming-up place and, although reinforced by No. 14 Platoon, the state of the ground and the absence of tanks destroyed any chance of success.

From 4.0 a.m. to 9.0 a.m. the enemy kept up a terrific barrage; thereafter the day was quiet and the rain continuous.

During the forenoon of this day, the 27th, it was proposed by the staff of the 23rd Division that the 41st Brigade should remain for another three days in the line.

General Skinner's representations on this point are too obvious to need reproduction; suffice it that they were held to be conclusive and it was decided to relieve the brigade the same night.

The Eighth Battalion was relieved by two companies of the 8th Bn. K.O.Y.L.I. (23rd Division) which suffered many casualties from a heavy barrage between 8.0 and 9.30 p.m., and the relief was not complete until 5.15 a.m. on the 28th.

The Seventh
Battalion.

August 28th, 1917.

Meanwhile the Seventh Battalion was not yet quite out of the wood.

During the evening, enemy movement had been noticed and it was thought that this presaged an attack. The barrage above mentioned came down at 8.0 p.m. and at the same time a shower of rifle-grenades fell on our front line followed by an infantry attack in waves. The S.O.S. was immediately sent up from the front line and repeated from Battalion H.Q. The main attack came from the Bone of Contention and was directed against the left flank of the Seventh Battalion, though a feint attack was made on the right.

Four or five waves composed this attack which was met with rifle and Lewis-gun fire and with bombs, including many German ones found in our lines. A post of the 7th Bn. 60th afforded invaluable assistance with enfilade fire from the left. The enemy suffered heavy casualties but in some cases succeeded in getting up to our trench, where he was met on the parapet in a hand-to-hand fight with the sword. About 8.10 p.m. our barrage fell, but at about 8.20 p.m. a second attack developed which was similarly repulsed, the enemy in his retirement suffering severely from our barrage. A number of his men came forward with their hands up calling out in English "Don't shoot!" One prisoner was taken. The enemy concerned in the attack wore new, clean clothing of a smoky-grey colour, whereas the men seen holding the line were dressed in uniform of a light sea-green colour. It appeared that a force of "Sturm Truppen," some three hundred strong, was employed and at dawn a large number of enemy corpses was seen in front of our line.

General Skinner's comment on the report on this action is reproduced:—

" 14th Division.

" Forwarded in continuation of my No. — of 27th inst. I think this may be considered a very creditable performance on the part of the 7th Rifle Brigade.

" (signed) P. C. B. SKINNER,

" Brigadier General,

" Commanding 41st Infantry Brigade.

" 29/8/17

(Copy to 23rd Div. for information)."

Relief was not complete until about 8.0 a.m. on the 28th, when the Seventh Battalion rejoined the remainder of the 41st Brigade, at Dickebusch.

So concluded for the 14th Division what is referred to in the Official Despatch as a "minor operation."

Its cost to the three Battalions of the Regiment was, in the Seventh Battalion, the six officers whose names have been mentioned in the narrative and one hundred and thirty-one other ranks; in the Eighth Battalion, the three officers mentioned and one hundred and twelve other ranks; in the Ninth Battalion, besides the three officers mentioned, Captain H. C. Round,* D.S.O., M.C., and 2nd-Lieutenant D. Thistlewood were killed; 2nd-Lieutenant J. E. Savill was wounded and missing; several officers were slightly

* Captain Round's gallant exploit as a 2nd-lieutenant at Arras in May 1917 is recounted on p. 60.

He met his death during one of the evening counter-attacks in Inverness Copse; after helping neighbouring troops who had lost all their officers, he was returning to his own company when he and his orderly were killed by a shell. He was not quite twenty-one.

gassed, whilst, of other ranks, there were two hundred and seventy-two casualties including gas cases.

After resting at Dickebusch on August 28th the Seventh and Eighth Battalions moved on the 29th to the Meteren area, the former under canvas and the latter in billets. The Ninth Battalion on the 29th marched from Wippenhoek to Thieushoek, near Caestre. At the end of the month the 14th Division received orders to move to the Neuve Eglise area.

THE THIRD STAGE. September 20th-23rd, 1917.

The strength of the resistance developed by the enemy in the neighbourhood of the Menin Road decided Sir Douglas Haig to extend the flank of the next attack southwards.

In his Despatch he says :—

“ It was undesirable, however, either to increase the already wide front of attack for which the Fifth Army was responsible or to divide between two Armies the control of the attack against the main ridge itself.

“ I therefore determined to extend the left of the Second Army northwards, entrusting the attack upon the whole of the high ground crossed by the Menin Road to General Sir Herbert Plumer as a single self-contained operation, to be carried out in conjunction with the attacks of the Fifth Army farther north.”

The Despatch goes on to describe how the enemy, in combination with his new “ pill-boxes,” had adopted a system of elastic defence, in which his forward trench lines (or lines of shell-hole posts) were held only in sufficient strength to disorganize the attack, while the bulk of his forces were kept in close reserve, ready to deliver a powerful and immediate blow which might recover the positions overrun by our troops before they had had time to consolidate them.

This new policy necessarily entailed corresponding changes in our method of attack. In addition to changes in artillery tactics, in the infantry more attention was paid to the use of the rifle-grenade and phosphorous rifle-grenade and to the mopping-up of shell-holes, while the importance of immediate and strong consolidation was emphasized.

The weather having improved during the beginning of September the 20th was chosen as the date for the attack. The front selected was from the Ypres-Comines Canal, north of Hollebeke, to the Ypres-Staden railway north of Langemarck.

The Battalions of the Regiment to be engaged in the Third Stage of the

Battle were the three Battalions of the 20th Division, Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth, in the Fifth Army, and the Sixteenth Battalion, 39th Division, in the Second Army.

Last heard of on August 13th in the Flêtre-Meteren area the Sixteenth Battalion was, on that date, moved by 'bus to the Ridge Wood sector (one thousand five hundred yards north of Vierstraat). On the 15th the Battalion moved into brigade reserve in the right sub-sector, Hollebeke, and on the 18th went up into the line in the right sub-sector of the Battle Wood sector (north of the Ypres-Comines Canal). There was heavy shelling during the relief and casualties were serious, Captain W. M. Banbury and four other ranks being killed, eighteen other ranks wounded and one missing.

Until the 29th the Battalion followed the normal course of front-line support and reserve in the Battle Wood, Hollebeke, Ridge Wood sectors; on that night it was relieved and moved by 'bus to Chippewa Camp (south-east of Zevecoten). The tour had been marked by constant shelling, causing a certain number of casualties in addition to those of the 18th.

Training was carried out in this camp and in the Steenvoorde area, whither the Battalion moved on September 4th, until the 12th when it embussed for Larch Wood in the Shrewsbury Forest sector and there went into brigade reserve.

Meanwhile, on the 9th, the following Honours and Awards had been notified for the period July 31st-August 5th: One D.S.O. (Lieut.-Colonel Hon. E. Coke, M.C.), three M.C.s and fourteen M.M.s.

On the 15th the Battalion was relieved and went into bivouac a mile south of Dickebusch, having suffered about twenty casualties, albeit in reserve.

Training was carried out here until the 18th, when the Battalion went into the front line at Battle Wood with "A," "B" and "D" Companies in front and "C" at Spoil Bank.

From there the Sixteenth Battalion was to move to the attack on September 20th.

The 39th Division was almost on the extreme right of the eight miles front of attack and would attack with one brigade—117th—in front line with the 118th in support and the 116th in divisional reserve. The 57th Brigade (19th Division) was on the right and the 124th Brigade (41st Division) on the left.

The 117th Brigade had three objectives—the Red, Blue and Green Lines.

The Sixteenth
Battalion.
Lower Star Post.
September 20th,
1917.

The capture and consolidation of the Red Line was the task of the 17th Bn. Sherwood Foresters, on the right, and of the Sixteenth Battalion, on the left ; that of the Blue Line was the aim of the 16th Bn. Sherwood Foresters, on the right, and of the 17th Bn. 60th (less one company) on the left ; this company would be responsible for the Green Line. Battalions would not occupy a greater depth than seventy-five yards and there would be a distance of thirty yards between battalions. The whole brigade to advance at zero and rear lines to halt when clear of enemy barrage to allow the leading lines to deploy to attacking distance.

No portion of the Blue Line battalions was to be employed to capture the Red Line unless the original attack on the latter had failed.

The 1st/6th Bn. Cheshire Regiment to be in brigade reserve. O.C. 17th Bn. 60th to have a direct call on two companies for the capture of the Green Line in the event of his being compelled to use his fourth company for the capture of the Blue Line.

In the event of an enemy attack after the capture of the Blue Line, 16th Bn. Sherwood Foresters and 17th Bn. 60th would have a direct call on two companies of 17th Bn. Sherwood Foresters and the Sixteenth Battalion respectively. The remaining two companies of these battalions would hold the Red Line.

Such, shortly, were Brig.-General Armytage's orders for the attack.

Colonel Coke's orders disposed his battalion on a two-company frontage, each company with three platoons in the first wave and one in the second. The first line was to consist of "D" Company on the right and "B" Company on the left ; the second of "C" and "A" in corresponding positions.

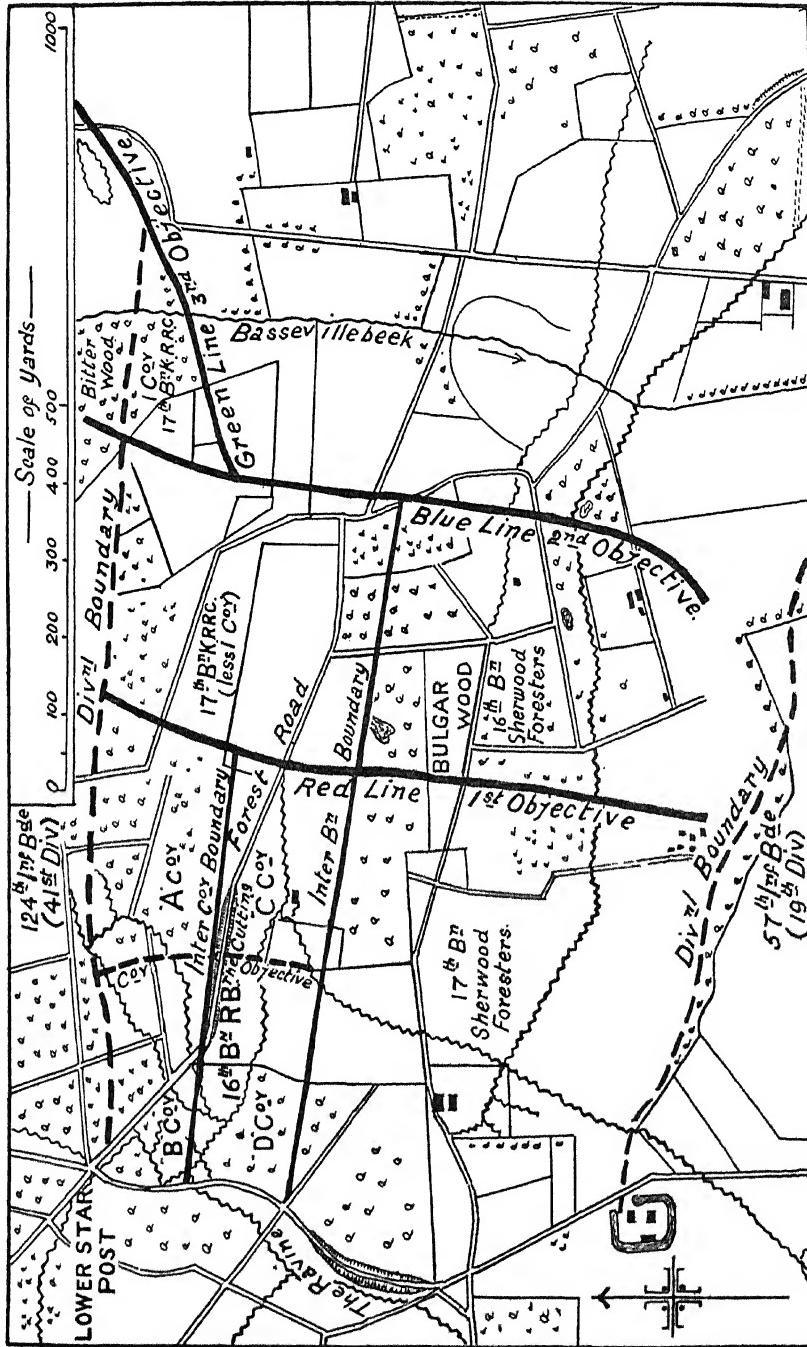
"B" and "D" were ear-marked as the two companies for employment, if needed, with the 17th Bn. 60th and were to be distinguished by a black ribbon on the right shoulder-strap ; "A" and "C," who, in these circumstances, would hold the Red Line, were to be appropriately decorated with red ribbon.

Zero hour was 5.40 a.m.

The attack started punctually in a thick fog which necessitated the use of the compass to maintain direction.

At zero hour a barrage of rifle grenades and phosphorous rifle-grenades was opened on a strong point at Lower Star Post and the attack was launched. Strong opposition was met with and hostile machine-guns opened from both flanks. The enemy also employed phosphorous bombs, one man of the Battalion being burnt. Parties were, however, sent round

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.



LOWER STAR POST—ATTACK BY THE SIXTEENTH BATTALION.
20th September, 1917.

each flank and the enemy surrendered, but not until he had caused severe casualties.

The next strong point was in the sunken road, leading from Lower Star Post to the cutting, and there the enemy was rushed and dispatched. At this time a good many casualties were inflicted by Lewis-guns firing on the enemy retreating to the Red Line. "A" and "C" Companies came under heavy machine-gun fire while advancing to this line, the fire coming chiefly from the left and particularly from a strong point beyond the divisional boundary. A party was sent across the boundary to capture this post and succeeded in doing so in the face of some opposition. But by now the battalion of the 124th Brigade on the left was considerably in rear of and out of touch with the Sixteenth Battalion's left company, which had lost all its officers and seventy-five per cent. of its other ranks. So the position at zero plus 18 minutes (5.58 a.m.) was that the right company of the Battalion was on the Red Line with the left company echeloned back as a left defensive flank. During consolidation enemy sniping was very persistent and was replied to by Lewis-guns sent out to cover consolidation. At this time the enemy was using incendiary bullets (presumably some form of "tracer"), which set the clothing of several men on fire ; the flames were extinguished by rolling the men in the mud.

Fifteen minutes after reaching the Red Line the commander of "C" Company, on the right, noticed that the left company of the 16th Bn. Sherwood Foresters was held up in Bulgar Wood by a party of the enemy, about forty strong, lying along Forest Road. A party went out and advanced, firing as it went ; the enemy wavered and then came out into the open and surrendered to the number of one officer, one medical officer and twenty-nine other ranks—the remainder had been killed.

The prisoners were utilized in assisting to carry down our wounded and the German M.O.'s professional services were also enlisted.

At 7.0 a.m. the 17th Bn. 60th passed through and advanced to the Blue Line.

There is not much more to be said regarding the Sixteenth Battalion on this day—it had done its job. At 7.30 p.m. the Diary records that the enemy was plainly visible assembling for counter-attack.

So plainly in fact that his dispositions were observed to be half-companies in lines of fours with thirty paces interval and his equipment to be of a white colour, with packs or something in the shape of a valise on the chest, possibly flammenwerfer. The S.O.S. barrage opened up within five seconds (?) and was perfect in intensity.

Before closing the account of this action it may be of interest to sketch in outline the doings of the rest of the 117th Brigade on this day.

Of the two battalions destined for the Blue Line the right battalion won its way through in the face of considerable opposition and at some cost to itself. The left battalion had a more difficult task as the battalion on its left was still not up in line ; the right company was able to keep up to the barrage but the centre and left companies were not and were compelled to form a defensive flank.

At 7.40 a.m. one company of the 1st/6th Bn. Cheshire Regt. was sent to reinforce this flank, followed later by a second.

The Green Line was not taken owing to the difficulties experienced, through no fault of its own, by the left battalion.

The O.C. 1st/6th Bn. Cheshire Regt. was then sent forward to examine the situation with a view to counter-attack with his two remaining companies ; he reported in due course that the situation from a defensive point of view was satisfactory ; that the 122nd Brigade (beyond the 124th) had apparently taken all its objectives and that there was no reason that he could see why the latter brigade, with requisite reinforcements, should not do the same.

At 1.10 p.m. news was received that the 41st Division would renew the attack on the Green Line from the north-north-west and on the Blue Line from the west.

Accordingly orders were issued for the 1st/6th Bn. Cheshire Regt. to take the Green Line in conjunction with the 41st Division's attack and for the 17th Bn. 60th to straighten out the situation on the Blue Line and to gain touch with the attacking battalion on its left.

The attack took place at 6.30 p.m. and at first was reported to be completely successful. It turned out, however, that the company of the Cheshire Regiment alone had been successful, capturing its portion of the Green Line with the greatest gallantry in the face of machine-gun fire ; unfortunately, as no advance had been made on its left flank, the company was later compelled to withdraw.

Another attack made by the 41st Division the next morning was equally unsuccessful and the 117th Brigade was that night relieved by the 118th.

Meanwhile on the night of the 20th/21st the Sixteenth Battalion was withdrawn into support about the cutting and the ravine on which area during most of the 21st the enemy maintained severe artillery fire. On the night of the 21st/22nd the Battalion moved on relief to bivouacs at Beggar's Rest, in the Ridge Wood area, and next day by lorry to Kempton Camp, Westoutre.

During the action the Sixteenth Battalion captured one officer, one

medical officer, fifty-six enemy other ranks with four machine-guns and one trench-mortar.

Its casualties were two officers killed (2nd-Lieutenants S. G. Gordon and R. T. Hopkin), eleven officers wounded (Captains N. B. Risley, P. R. L. Charrington, 2nd-Lieutenants A. B. Smith, R. S. G. Epps, H. J. Ingram, S. P. Siebert, O. F. Whitaker, D. L. T. Dally, N. V. Marshall, Captain E. Krolik and 2nd-Lieutenant R. H. Membrey—(the two last-named “at duty”—) and amongst other ranks twenty-seven killed, one hundred and fifty-nine wounded (nine “at duty”), and nine missing.

The Sixteenth Battalion and the 117th Brigade (including the 1st/6th Bn. Cheshire Regt. which was “on loan”) had given a good account of themselves, and it was no fault of theirs that their efforts had not been crowned with complete success.

It would, however, be unfair to blame the 41st Division, which doubtless had sufficient troubles of its own.

For the remainder of the month the Battalion was engaged in re-organizing and training except for a short spell in divisional reserve and in support to the 118th Brigade. This led to a further two other ranks killed, thirteen wounded and two missing. On the 26th 2nd-Lieutenant R. H. Membrey was sent to hospital—sick.

If the spectacle of a wounded officer “carrying on” in spite of his wounds is an inspiration to his men, then this officer had done his best to inspire those under him. Wounded on July 31st and again on September 20th, he, on each occasion, remained at duty and none will grudge him now the rest and attention which he had earned.

At the end of September the Sixteenth Battalion was in Dranoutre village and Lurgon Camp.

The 20th Division. The three Battalions of the 20th Division settled down to training and recreation at Proven and a liberal allowance of leave was given to officers and men. One commanding officer took this opportunity and another, Colonel Riley of the Twelfth Battalion, moved up to command of the 60th Brigade during the temporary absence of General Butler in England on the same mission.

Fired, possibly, by the presence of Major Lionel Tennyson, the Tenth Battalion took violently to cricket, “a welcome change from the inevitable football.” Company matches were played and the officers beat the Battalion, while the Battalion team beat the Eleventh Battalion and the 11th Bn. 60th. The actual pitch is described as very good but “the surrounding field and the weather left much to be desired.”

In this Battalion one D.S.O., one D.C.M. and seven M.M.s were awarded during the month.

In the Eleventh Battalion Colonel Cotton unfortunately had to be evacuated suffering from the after-effects of gas and Major M. Morgan-Owen took command. Eleven M.M.s were awarded in the Battalion.

Rifle ranges were constructed and all three Battalions were exercised in musketry ; this was particularly necessary as some reinforcements arriving had come from the Army Service Corps.

During this period Battalions were visited by the Corps and Divisional Commanders, who congratulated all ranks on their performances in the recent fighting. At this time also Brig.-General H. H. G. Hyslop, D.S.O., succeeded Brig.-General R. Browne Clayton, D.S.O., in command of the 59th Brigade.

On September 2nd the Tenth and Eleventh Battalions moved to a special training area at Herzeele, five miles to the west ; but on the 8th they returned to Proven whence all three Battalions moved by rail, the Tenth and Twelfth on the 10th to camps in the Malakoff Farm area and at Hull's Farm respectively, and the Eleventh on the 11th to Redan Camp, near Brielen. These moves were consequent upon the relief of the 38th Division by the 20th Division.

Such training was continued as was possible in view of the many pre-action carrying and working-parties and, on the 18th, the final peaceful note appears stating that the Eleventh Battalion Band was sixth in a competition for bands in the XIVth Corps.

The Tenth,
Eleventh and
Twelfth
Battalions.
Attack on
Eagle Trench.
September
20th-23rd, 1917.

* In the main attack of the Second and Fifth Armies on September 20th it has been seen that the 39th Division was almost at the extreme right of the line ; the 20th Division was to be on the extreme left.

The division was to attack with the 60th Brigade on the right and the 59th on the left, having as neighbours the 51st Division of the XVIIIth Corps on its right and the Guards Division on its left, but the latter was not to move.

Except on the extreme left of the 59th Brigade there would be two objectives.

First, the Red Dotted Line running through Louis Farm-Blue House and t'Goed Ter Veste Farm, thence turning west to the railway.

Second, the Green Line running from a point seven hundred yards south-east of Red House, thence just west of that house to t'Goed Ter Veste Farm, and thence becoming one with the Red Dotted Line.

The 60th Brigade was to have in front line the Twelfth Battalion on the

* Map will be found on p. 151.

right and the 6th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry on the left, with the 6th Bn. K.S.L.I. in support and the 12th Bn. 60th in reserve. Front-line battalions would attack on a three-company frontage with one company in battalion reserve.

The 59th Brigade would attack with the 11th Bn. 60th on the right, the 10th Bn. 60th on the left, the Eleventh Battalion in support and the Tenth Battalion in reserve. Two companies of the Eleventh Battalion were placed at the disposal of O.s C. attacking battalions, one to each battalion. In neither brigade would there be any leap-frogging.

There would be a pause of 1 hour 25 minutes on the first objective.

On the night of September 19th/20th battalions moved into their final positions and at 5.40 a.m., on the 20th, the attack was launched.

In the 60th Brigade, the right of the Twelfth Battalion, as also its neighbours of the 51st Division, got forward without difficulty ; similarly the left battalion of the 59th Brigade went forward to t'Goed Ter Veste Farm.

But the two inner battalions were hung up by that same Eagle Trench, which had resisted all efforts of the Twelfth Battalion a month before. On this occasion the left of the Battalion after going a short distance forward came under fire from Eagle Trench in its rear.

After midday orders were issued for a continuation of the attack on the Green Line at 4.0 p.m., but, by order of the corps commander, the hour was subsequently altered to 6.30 p.m. and the objective to the Red Dotted Line.

In the 60th Brigade two companies of the 6th Bn. K.S.L.I. were to carry forward the original attacking troops to the objective.

In the 59th Brigade, the Eleventh Battalion, though not employed in the morning attack, had become much split up. For the afternoon attack news of the change of zero hour and of the objective was not received until 3.56 p.m. The task of the Eleventh Battalion was to attack on the original right battalion frontage, previously undertaken by the 11th Bn. 60th. For the attack "C" Company was on the right, "D" on the left with "A" behind and "B" in reserve. There was a preliminary objective in Eagle Trench for the two leading companies and "A" Company was to go through them to the final objective. It will be observed that leap-frogging was now permitted. The companies had some way to go to their forming-up positions, "B" Company as much as one thousand yards ; the country was level and the day clear. A smoke-barrage had been ordered to blind the machine-guns in Eagle Trench, but this unfortunately was non-existent, so far as the Eleventh Battalion was concerned. As a consequence the forming up of the Battalion took place in full view of the enemy and under concentrated artillery and machine-gun fire.

In such circumstances it was remarkable that the attack went forward at all, but with ten officer and heavy non-commissioned officer casualties and a loss of sixty-six per cent. of the troops engaged, complete success was impossible and a portion of Eagle Trench remained in enemy hands forming a pronounced salient. Certain parts of the 11th Bn. 60th were relieved, including one by 2nd-Lieutenant Smith with "B" Company, who remained in Eagle Trench, seventy yards from an enemy post in the same trench, until relieved on the night of the 22nd/23rd.

Otherwise Colonel Morgan-Owen devoted his attention to securing the safety of the Langemarck defences.

In the meanwhile the Tenth Battalion had moved up and taken the place of the Eleventh in support and had provided one company—"D"—in close support of the evening attack.

On September 21st no infantry attacks took place on either side, although the enemy attempted bombing attacks on the 60th Brigade front in the neighbourhood of Louis Farm, losing as prisoners eight men of the 508th "Sturm Abtheilung" of the 208th Division. There was heavy shelling during the evening, and that night the 12th Bn. 60th relieved elements of the other three battalions on the 60th Brigade front, the Twelfth Battalion returning to the Au Bon Gite area. The same night the Tenth Battalion took over the 59th Brigade front from the 10th Bn. 60th and the Eleventh Battalion, H.Q. of the latter moving back to Reitres Farm.

On the morning of the 22nd it was proposed to attack Eagle Trench with the aid of two tanks. "Unfortunately," says the Tenth Battalion Diary, "the tanks got embedded in the ditches on either side of the Langemarck road, with the result that the attack could not take place. It was especially unfortunate that the point selected by the tanks to act as landmarks should be on either side of Battalion Headquarters."

That day and the ensuing night were particularly quiet.

On the 23rd it was decided to attack once more; with the tanks if they could be dug out, without them if they could not.

As it turned out, despite heroic efforts on the part of tank officers and men, the tanks remained immovable and it was decided to attack without them at a later hour—7.0 a.m.

In this attack the 60th and 59th Brigades were to co-operate, the former represented by the 12th Bn. 60th and the 6th Bn. K.S.L.I., the latter by the Tenth Battalion and both by their trench-mortar batteries.

It will be recalled that the position of the enemy in Eagle Trench was a salient and there were, in the same trench, on the south, the 60th Brigade and on the north, the Tenth Battalion. It followed that there could be no

artillery bombardment and it was decided to take advantage of the fact that the enemy was partly surrounded and to rely solely on a surprise.

The following plan was adopted :

Two pairs of Stokes-mortars of the 61st T.M. Battery, one pair on each brigade front, were brought up overnight with a view to opening a heavy barrage at zero hour. Bombing squads and rifle-grenadiers would attack from both flanks, each supported by a section of moppers-up ; at the same time one company would attack frontally.

The party on the left would consist of one officer and thirty-five other ranks ; that for the frontal attack of two officers and fifty-eight other ranks —both from the Tenth Battalion—and the party on the right would be found by the 60th Brigade.

All went according to plan.

At 7.0 a.m. the trench-mortar barrage opened and was most accurate and effective. At 7.3 a.m. the trench-mortars ceased fire, notifying the firing of the last round with a white Verey light. The bombing parties on either flank at once bombed down the trench, having worked forward under cover of the barrage so as to throw their first bombs on the enemy from his rear. The latter countered quickly with bombs until he realized the presence of the frontal attacking company,* when he gave up hope.

The fight lasted a few minutes longer on the flanks but the majority of the garrison either surrendered or tried to make for its support line.

As a result of this most successful operation upwards of twenty enemy dead were counted in the trench besides one officer and six men—all badly wounded ; ninety-four unwounded prisoners were captured besides seven machine-guns (all damaged) and a quantity of bombs and S.A.A.

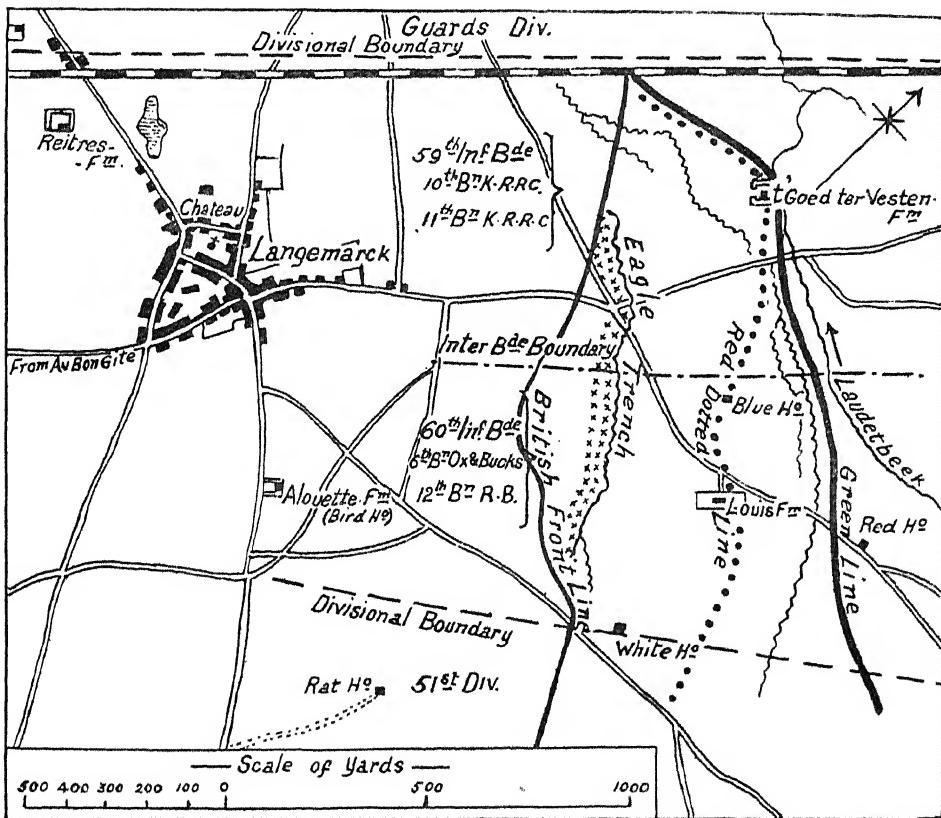
A portion of the enemy garrison appears to have occupied two block-houses just in rear of the trench ; the majority of those who escaped came from here, but about twenty were seen to fall on the way as a result of Lewis-gun fire.

About 8.30 a.m. the enemy was seen forming up on a line about four hundred yards distant and advancing to the attack in considerable force ; the attackers were fired on and dispersed.

When news of this threat reached the Eleventh Battalion, 2nd-Lieutenant P. R. Coltman with fifty men went over the open to reinforce the left of the Tenth Battalion line. There he found two enemy machine-guns and made them ready for action. Serjeant Moulding was sent to reconnoitre the trenches in a north-westerly direction and as a result a post was established at the fork-roads.

* This was commanded by Captain T. G. L. Ashwell, who received the Military Cross for his work on this day. The names of the other officers are unknown.

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.



THE TENTH, ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH BATTALIONS ATTACK ON EAGLE TRENCH.

20th-23rd September, 1917.

On the night of the 23rd/24th the 61st Brigade relieved the 59th and 60th Brigades. As a consequence the three battalions moved back; the Tenth Battalion to Malakoff Farm, the Eleventh, now one hundred and fifty strong, to Redan Farm, and the Twelfth to Hull's Farm.

Bearing in mind the weakness of battalions when they went in, casualties had been heavy. In the Tenth Battalion, 2nd-Lieutenant C. L. Jeffery died of wounds, while 2nd-Lieutenants W. Jeffery and F. L. Bell were wounded. In addition there were one hundred and twenty other rank casualties, of whom twenty-four were killed.

In the Eleventh Battalion Captain W. H. Chapman and 2nd-Lieutenants W. J. Mason and J. E. Abbott were killed; Captain T. Graham and 2nd-Lieutenants F. Shaw, G. Garner, A. W. R. Lawday, R. Keeble, J. W. Congdon, W. S. White, G. Wiggins, F. G. Kirkby and W. H. Owen were wounded, while one hundred and ninety-three other ranks also became casualties.

The Twelfth Battalion lost Captain K. H. Hugh-Jones and 2nd-Lieutenants P. A. E. Brand and C. Ayres, killed; Captains C. W. Tait (at duty), B. G. Baker, A. W. M. Rissik, L. D. Williams, 2nd-Lieutenants D. C. Maclean, D. Purdy, J. W. Palmer (subsequently died of wounds), and A. W. White wounded, with twenty-five other ranks killed, one hundred and forty-seven wounded and twenty-eight missing.

On September 27th the Twelfth Battalion moved back to Proven, followed next day by the Tenth and Eleventh.

The latter was relieved at Redan Farm by the First Battalion, the 20th Division being in process of relief by the 4th.

During September Honours and Awards were notified as follows:—

In the Tenth Battalion, one Bar to M.C., one M.C. and eight M.M.s.

In the Eleventh Battalion, one D.S.O., two M.C.s and three D.C.M.s.

Those for the Twelfth Battalion are not recorded.

For its work in this stage of the battle the 20th Division received warm congratulations from the commanders of the XIVth Corps (Lord Cavan), the Fifth Army (Sir H. Gough) and the Second Army (Sir H. Plumer).

These messages were also in the nature of farewells, for the 20th Division (less artillery) had finished with the Third Battle of Ypres and was to return south.

On September 30th and October 1st the division, leaving its unhappy gunners behind, was railed from Proven to Bapaume.

Before leaving, the 60th Brigade held a voluntary service in memory of fallen comrades.

The final entry in the Twelfth Battalion Diary reads : " Back on the Somme once more after having spent nine weeks up North ! "

The Thirteenth
Battalion.

On July 31st, the opening day of the Third Battle of Ypres, the Thirteenth Battalion was moved up from its camps near Kemmel Hill to bivouac in a field near Store Farm, some mile and a half further east. The 111th Brigade, however, was not required to reinforce upon this day.

On August 1st the Battalion moved into the front line east of Wytschaete, the weather, as is known, being atrocious, and, on the 3rd, moved back to the Ridge Defences, being relieved by the 13th Bn. 60th. On the 6th the Battalion sent forward patrols through the lines of the 60th and successfully established posts giving good observation to the east.

Next night the Battalion was relieved by the 45th and 46th Bns. Australian Infantry and returned to its old camps on Kemmel Hill, moving thence on the 8th to Birr Barracks at Locre, where it remained until the 25th. Many working-parties were found for the line and behind it, the popularity of which is graphically recorded in " For the Duration."

On the 13th the Thirteenth Battalion had a sad duty to perform in finding the funeral and firing-parties for the burial in the Hospice at Locre of Brig.-General R. C. MacLachlan, D.S.O., Commanding 112th Brigade, who had been killed by an enemy sniper. The funeral was attended by the Corps and Divisional Commanders and by representatives of the Third, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth and Sixteenth Battalions.

Ronald Campbell MacLachlan was the son of Rev. A. N. C. MacLachlan and was born on July 24th, 1872. At Eton he was in Warre-Cornish's house from 1886 to 1891, when he went to Sandhurst. He was gazetted to the Regiment on July 8th, 1893, and joined the Third Battalion at Peshawar. In 1896 he was appointed adjutant of the Rifle Depôt and thereby missed the Tochi Valley Expedition in 1897. In 1899 he returned to the Third Battalion at Rawalpindi and in September of that year proceeded to South Africa, being attached to the 2nd Bn. 60th Rifles, with whom he was besieged in Ladysmith. In the Boer attack on Wagon Hill on January 6th, 1900, he was severely wounded through the chest and spent the remainder of the Siege in the neutral hospital at Intombi. With the Queen's Medal and three clasps he returned to the Third Battalion, having, in March 1901, been appointed adjutant: in 1904 he served as a transport officer with Sir Francis Younghusband's Mission to Tibet and received the medal and clasp.

On the formation of the Officers' Training Corps he became its first Staff Officer at Oxford in September, 1908, and was responsible for the evolution of the O.T.C. from the old University Rifle Corps.

So successful was he in this that, through his own personality, the somewhat unpopular "dog-shooters" gave place to a body of enthusiasts with a waiting-list containing the best men in the University and, for this great service, he was made M.A. "Honoris Causa."

When war came in 1914 it was thanks to MacLachlan at Oxford, as well as to Thornton at Cambridge and Nugent at Leeds and Manchester that the Regiment obtained such a magnificent band of young officers.

Appointed to the command of the Eighth Battalion, MacLachlan raised and trained it and, in due course, took it to France in May, 1915.

In December, 1915, he was severely wounded but returned to his Battalion in September, 1916, and remained with it until his promotion in January, 1917.

In June, 1916, he received the D.S.O. and was mentioned in despatches on December 30th, 1916, and November 7th, 1917.

In the Regiment he was universally beloved: an exceedingly smart adjutant, a good sportsman, a charming companion and a master of his profession, there was no height to which he could not have risen had he been spared.

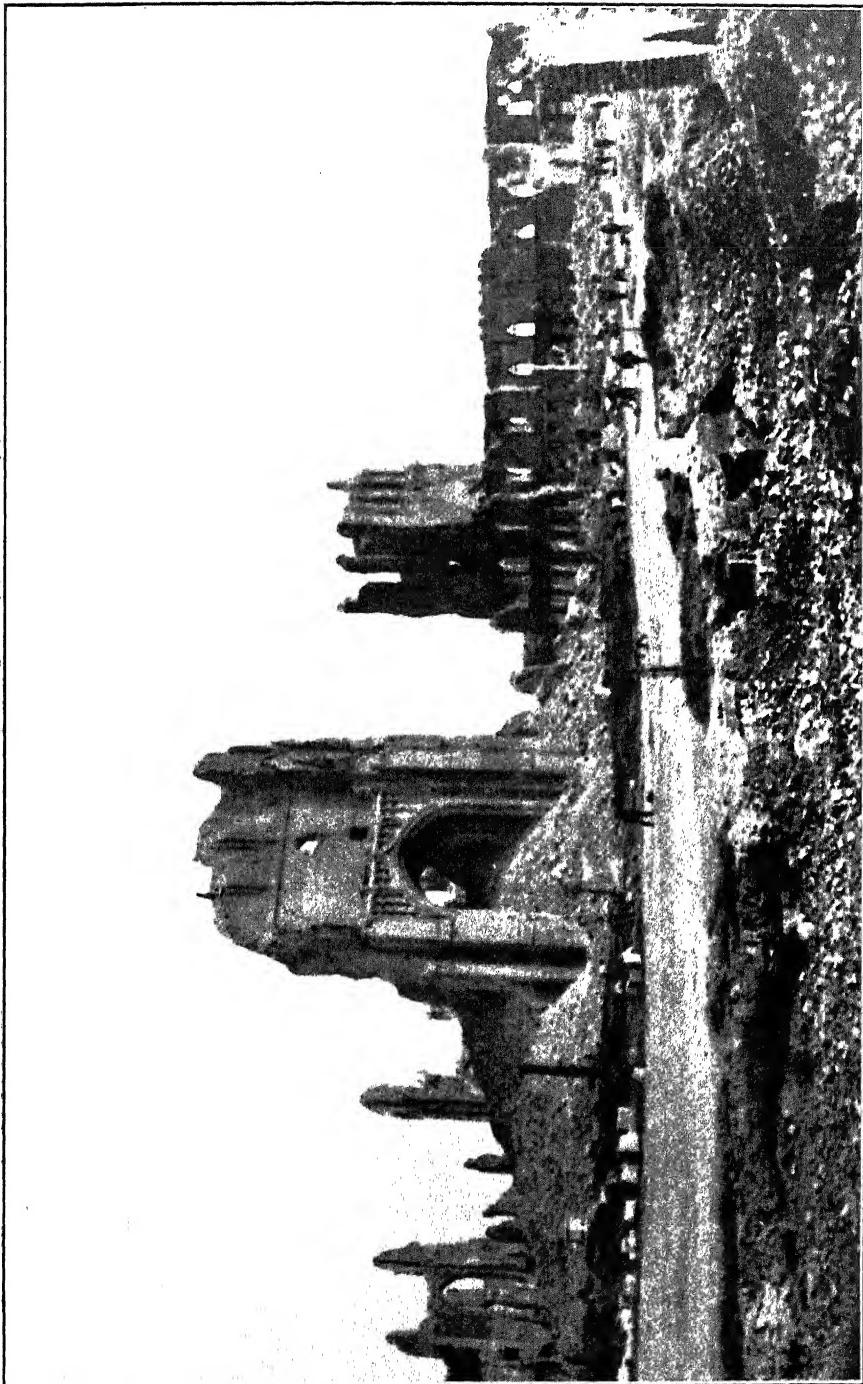
But what distinguished Ronnie MacLachlan above all else was that amazing personality which enabled him to get the best out of all with whom he came in contact.

It is unlikely that the Regiment will ever again see his equal in character: his superior—never.

On August 25th the Regimental Birthday was celebrated. Football matches, Rugby and Association, were played, whilst the Divisional Band and that of the 8th Bn. Somerset Light Infantry contributed to the success of the day. Tea, under Battalion arrangements, was followed by an excellent concert.

On the 26th the Battalion moved into the reserve area, Rossignol Wood, and the next night went into the line at Denys Wood, near Oosttaverne, the scene of the Third Battalion's action in the Messines Battle. In the early hours of the 29th the acting adjutant, 2nd-Lieutenant H. N. Ries, was wounded in the thigh and Captain R. Colvill-Jones took over the duties of adjutant.* During the month the Battalion also lost 2nd-Lieutenant E. Walpole wounded, besides sixteen other ranks killed and some seventy wounded. On the 30th Lieut.-Colonel R. Chester-Master, Commanding

* The death of Captain Colvill-Jones, M.C., at the very end of the War, is recorded on p. 143, "For the Duration."



YPRES.

1st October, 1917.

Imperial War Museum—Copyright.

13th Bn. 60th, was killed by a sniper at the same spot as had been Brig.-General MacLachlan.

The Battalion spent September in a somewhat wearisome round of trenches and camps, holding the line for short periods at the Spoil Bank and north of the Ypres-Comines Canal. During the latter tour, from the 14th to the 18th, the 111th Brigade was occupying the sector from which the 19th Division was to attack on September 20th and was under that division; good patrol work was carried out which came in useful to the attacking division.

From the 18th to the 27th the Battalion was at Wakefield Huts and a musketry week was planned, "signs of revived interest in the rifle being visible in all ranks." Unfortunately a return to the line on the 27th, on and south of the Menin Road, put a stop to the rifle meeting.

As has been seen, the Thirteenth Battalion had been given no active part in the attack of the Second and Fifth Armies on September 20th and in the next phase of the Battle, the attack by these two armies on September 26th, no Battalion of the Regiment was actively engaged. But, as happened after September 20th, enemy reaction took the form of violent counter-attacks and the Thirteenth Battalion was to bear its share in repelling one of these. Unfortunately no details are available.

The next combined attack of the Second and Fifth Armies was to take place on October 4th. The rôle allotted to the 37th Division was to protect the right flank of the Second Army which rested on the Ypres-Menin road. To effect this the division was to attack with the 63rd Brigade on the right and the 111th on the left, the objective being, at the furthest point, no more than two hundred yards away and south of the Menin Road. But two hundred yards in the Tower Hamlets district in a wet October was a considerable journey.

For the attack the Thirteenth Battalion was to be in brigade reserve with one company attached to the 13th Bn. Royal Fusiliers on the left of the brigade front; the latter battalion had relieved the Thirteenth Battalion in the front line on the night of October 3rd. Here again, unfortunately, the Battalion Diary is bare of detail—it does not, in fact, mention the attack at all.*

It appears, however, from the 111th Brigade Diary, that two companies were involved in the fighting on the 13th Bn. Royal Fusiliers' front and the Battalion undoubtedly suffered casualties amounting, during this tour, to 2nd-Lieutenant E. Mc.D. Campbell and nine other ranks killed, with Captain E. Boughton-Leigh, 2nd-Lieutenants G. Osbaldeston, J. F. Spence,

* Nor does "For the Duration."

C. D. Piper and sixty-six other ranks wounded. Amongst the killed was C.S.-M. Nethercott, who had been with the Battalion since 1914.

On the night of the 5th the Battalion was relieved and went back to Willibek Camp for a short rest.

Although destined to spend the remainder of the year 1917 in and out of the line in the Ypres area, the Thirteenth Battalion was not called upon to take part in any of the further attacks which marked the final stages of the Battle.

**The First
Battalion.**

The First Battalion was last referred to at the end of July when it was in Barossa Camp, north of St. Laurent Blangy, in the old No-Man's Land, north-east of Arras. It remained there training until August 10th, when it moved south to another camp near Tilloy and thence on the 14th to the front line, taking over the right sub-sector south of the River Scarpe and opposite Rœux. An uneventful tour finished on the 18th when the Battalion moved into brigade reserve at Wilderness Camp.

Another tour in the front line, this time just north of Monchy, followed from the 26th to the 30th and was chiefly memorable from the wetness and darkness of the night when going in. On the 31st the Battalion was back at Barossa Camp, whence on September 5th it marched twelve miles to Berles-au-Bois, a long, hot, march and trying to troops who had spent three months in the trenches. The 4th Division was now in the VIth Corps and, on its leaving the XVIIth Corps, the Corps Commander, Sir Charles Fergusson, sent a message of congratulation and of farewell to all ranks.

Serious and intensive training was now undertaken as there was more than a suspicion that it would not be long before the Battalion was required further north.

The Battalion spent a happy fortnight at Berles and it is on record that few would have raised objections if the period had been extended to a month.

Billets were comfortable and some interesting competitions carried out. These were :—

1. Route March "B" 1. "A" 2.
2. Drill "B" 1. "I" 2.
3. Guard-Mounting "I" 1. "C" 2.
4. Combined Obstacle, Assault and Musketry . "C" 1. "B" 2
(after a tie).
5. Cross-Country Run "I" 1. "B" 2.

Thus "B" Company became Best Company-at-Arms.

It was at this time that the 4th Division lost its Commander—Major-General Hon. W. Lambton—who was invalidated as the result of a heavy fall when out riding.

It was nearly two years since, in the autumn of 1915, he had succeeded Lieut.-General Sir H. M. Wilson (of the Regiment) on the latter's promotion to command of the XIIth Corps and, in deplored its loss, the First Battalion felt that it owed much to his invariable kindness and help and the great interest that he always displayed in its affairs. Major-General T. G. Matheson succeeded to the command of the 4th Division.

At the beginning of the month Battalion Buglers were re-instituted and the silver bugles which had been stored in England on the outbreak of the War were brought out from home. As, of the ordinary G.S. ammunition bugles taken to France in August, 1914, by November of that year there remained but three, with one mouth-piece between them, the original storing appears to have been a wise precaution.

On September 18th the Battalion marched to Mondicourt, on the Doullens-Arras railway, and there spent the night.

By September 20th nine Battalions of the Regiment had been engaged in one stage or another of the Third Battle of Ypres; one, the Thirteenth, had been in the line and had had experience of the repercussions of an attack.

Now it was the turn of the last of the eleven Battalions of the Rifle Brigade in France and Belgium, and that the senior, so, on September 20th, the First Battalion, still under the command of Colonel Fellowes, entrained at Mondicourt for Hopoutre, whence it marched some two or three miles to Prattle Camp.

The 4th Division was now in the XIVth Corps of the Fifth Army and Lord Cavan came to look up the Battalion the day following its arrival.

Training was continued until the 28th, when there was another rail journey from Proven to Elverdinghe, followed by a march to Redan Camp, where the First Battalion, as has been seen, relieved the Eleventh.

The last few days of September were spent in physical training and games and in fitting out for the operations which were now imminent.

The First Battalion. It will be recalled that another stage—the fifth—of October 4th, 1917. the Third Battle of Ypres took the form of a combined attack by the Second and Fifth Armies on a front extending from the Menin Road in the south to the Ypres-Staden railway in the north.

On the extreme left the course of the battle since July 31st has been

traced by following the fortunes of the Sixteenth Battalion and the 20th Division and now the 4th Division was to make personal acquaintance with such familiar places as the Steenbeek, Au Bon Gite, Langemarck, Eagle Trench and many others, although in some cases the names had been changed.

As a preliminary to the attack the First Battalion on October 1st took over the front line east-north-east of Langemarck and on the night of the 3rd on relief moved back to Candle Trench just east of Pilckem with Battalion H.Q. in Jolie Farm near by.

On October 4th the XIVth Corps was to attack with the 4th Division on the right and the 29th Division on the left ; on its right was the XVIIIth Corps. The 4th Division was to have the 11th Brigade on the right, the 10th on the left and the 12th in reserve ; on its right was the 33rd Brigade of the 11th Division.

In the 11th Brigade, the 1st Bn. Somerset Light Infantry was on the right, the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. on the left, the 1st Bn. East Lancashire Regt. in support, and the First Battalion in reserve.

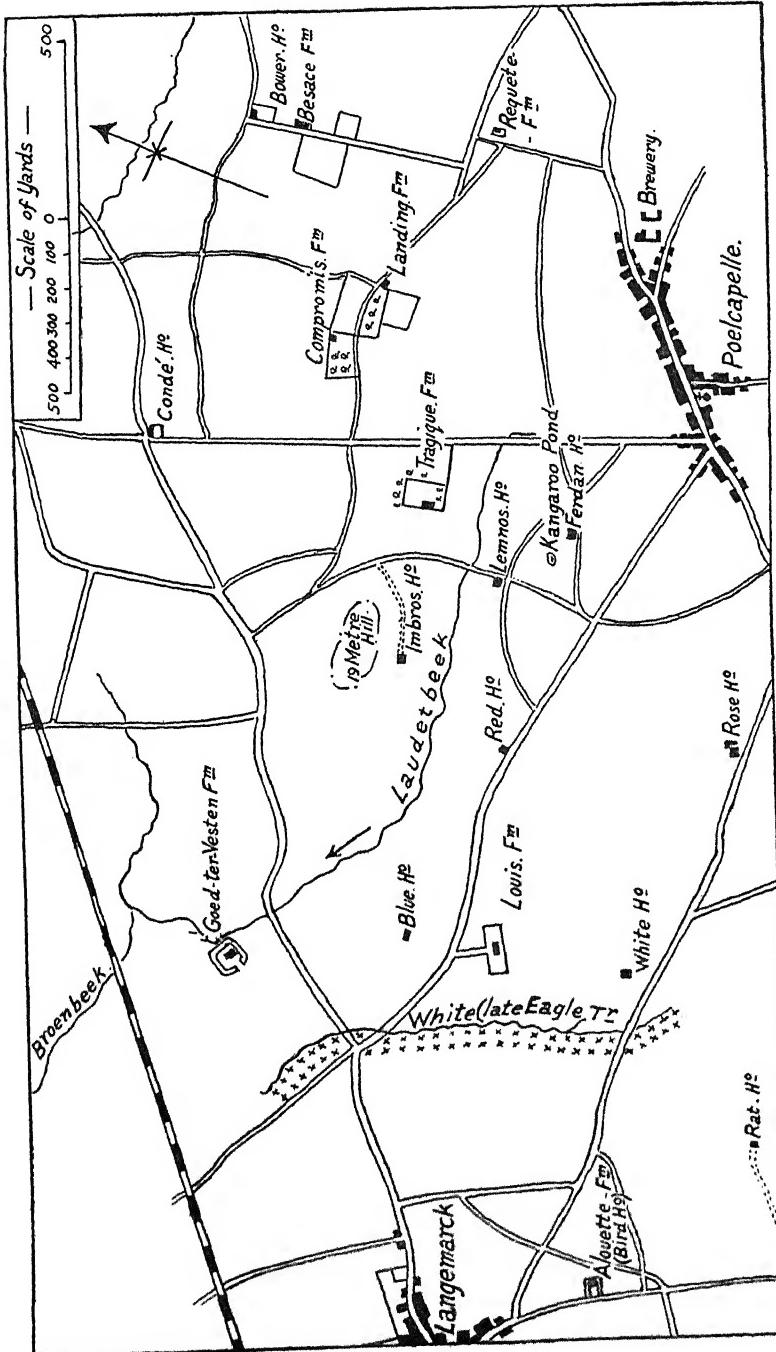
There were to be two objectives, the first including Kangaroo Pond, Lemnos House, Imbros House and 19 Metre Hill ; the second included Tragique Farm and crossed the Poelcapelle road some two hundred and fifty yards north-east of Ferdan House. There was to be a pause of one hour on the first objective. It was not known for certain what enemy formation held the objectives, but it was possible that it would prove to be the 40th (Saxon) Division. Should this be the case, it and the First Battalion were old friends who had faced each other on the edge of Ploegsteert Wood during the whole winter of 1914-15.

The support battalion was designated as counter-attack battalion and, as its name implies, would counter-attack an enemy counter-attack on the initiative of its C.O. without waiting for orders. The first move of the First Battalion would be to The Ings, subsequently it might be required to replace the East Lancashire in the old front line. Zero hour was 6.0 a.m.

The assaulting battalions got forward successfully, although some trouble was experienced in the neighbourhood of 19 Metre Hill and the East Lancashire were soon employed. In the meanwhile the First Battalion (less "C" Company employed as brigade carrying party and assembled in White (late Eagle) Trench) moved forward about one thousand yards and dug in with "I" Company on the right, "B" on the left, and "A" in support.

At 2.30 p.m. an order was received to move forward and prepare to

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.



THE FIRST BATTALION, ACTION NEAR POELCAPELLE.

4th-13th October, 1917.

counter-attack in conjunction with the 1st Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regt. (10th Brigade) on the left.

The three companies succeeded in getting through the enemy barrage with few casualties, "B" and "I" reaching the original front line while "A" remained back at Au Bon Gite. Battalion H.Q. moved to Bird House (late Alouette Farm).

At 5.0 p.m. orders were received cancelling any further advance and the night was spent in reorganizing. "B" Company was moved across the Laudetbeek to form a defensive flank and "I" in position some two hundred yards in front of the original line.

On the evening of October 5th sudden orders were received to take over the brigade front line from the 1st Bn. Somerset Light Infantry and the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. This was done, the line consisting of posts from north-east of Ferdan House—south of Tragique Farm—along the front of Lemnos House to near Imbros House. "I" Company was on the right with "C" in support and "B" on the left with "A" in support.

The next night the Battalion took over another one hundred yards from the 1st Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regt., on its left, and advanced its posts over 19 Metre Hill and up to Tragique Farm, thus securing the barrage-line for the next attack and clearing all ground between it and the jumping-off line; a very creditable piece of work.

On the early morning of the 7th, whilst reconnoitring the new posts with Colonel Fellowes, Lieutenant C. J. Chamberlain was unluckily killed by a sniper in a shell-hole, fifty yards away; Colonel Fellowes and his orderly had a desperate crawl back, being sniped at for four hundred yards, but happily without further casualty.

That night the Battalion was relieved and returned to Redan Camp.

Casualties, in addition to Lieutenant Chamberlain, included Captain J. W. Egerton-Green and 2nd-Lieutenant D. Heald died of wounds with twenty-eight other ranks killed: Lieutenant L. B. Leech, 2nd-Lieutenants Hon. D. E. F. O'Brien, F. J. Kersley and seventy-eight other ranks wounded with one missing.

The next general attack took place on October 9th. The 11th Brigade was in divisional reserve and, beyond standing to at zero hour—5.20 a.m.—the First Battalion was not called upon.

Sir Douglas Haig, having decided to press on while circumstances still permitted, ordered the next attack, to be known officially as the First Battle of Passchendaele, to be made on October 12th from the Ypres-Roulers railway to Houthulst Forest.

The First
Battalion.
The First Battle of
Passchendaele.
October 12th-13th,
1917.

Until the 10th there had been hopes in the First Battalion of relief and a move right back; however, there had been a change of plans and the Battalion found that it would take part in the attack on the 12th.

Arrangements for the attack were necessarily hurried and the 4th Division's operation order consists largely of information which would be "communicated later"; the general plan, however, was that the Division would attack with the 12th Brigade in front line, the 10th in support and the 11th in reserve. The final objective was about twelve hundred yards distant on the right and one thousand yards on the left.

The First Battalion was to be attached to the 12th Brigade, commanded by Brig.-General A. Carton de Wiart, V.C., and was to act as "second reserve battalion."

Accordingly, on the afternoon of the 10th "B" and "C" Companies moved up to Candle Trench.

About 2.0 p.m. on the 11th Colonel Fellowes was hurriedly summoned to the 12th Brigade H.Q. and there informed that plans had been altered and that the Battalion would now be "first reserve battalion." There was no time for the issue of formal orders, such as were given being verbal and from the map.

On the afternoon of the 11th the remainder of the Battalion moved to Candle Trench and after dark moved up and relieved the 2nd Bn. Essex Regt. around Louis Farm. During the night it advanced again to the assembly position west of the Poelcapelle-Condé House road. The Household Battalion* and the 1st Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regt. were the assaulting battalions with the 1st Bn. The King's Own (Royal Lancaster) Regt. in support. Zero hour was 5.25 a.m.

On October 12th the assault was launched punctually and "A," "B" and "I" Companies were well over the road before the enemy barrage fell, "B" and "I" following the supporting battalion at seven hundred yards distance with "A" and "C" in support of them. Although the attacking troops of the 12th Brigade progressed satisfactorily the 55th Brigade of the 18th Division on the right was unable to capture the Brewery and fortified houses in Poelcapelle, the result being that the right flank of the 12th Brigade was completely exposed and subjected to very heavy machine-gun fire. A defensive flank was at once formed by "I" Company and some platoons of the King's Own running some five hundred yards southwest from Requete Farm. This was a remarkably fine piece of work.

* The Household Battalion was a permanent war formation composed of officers and men of the three Household Cavalry Regiments.

"C" Company supported "I" while "A" and "B" dug in on their objective about the line Landing Farm—Compromis Farm.

During the evening the enemy launched several unproductive counter-attacks and, during the night, the Battalion—now support battalion—pushed forward with "A" and "B" Companies to the line Landing Farm—Besace Farm—Bower House. "I" Company's right was relieved and brought back one hundred yards whilst "C" Company remained in support to all. All this time the weather was unbelievably bad; re-organization was almost impossible as it was necessary to look into practically every shell-hole to see if there were anyone there or not.

There is preserved in Colonel Fellowes' diary an original document which should be quoted here. Dated October 12th and in General Carton de Wiart's handwriting on the "buff slip" of a peace-time office it runs as follows :

" DEAR FELLOWES,

" I want the H.B. (Household Battalion) and War. (1st Bn. R. Warwickshire Regiment) to hold the whole front line—which they can easily do at dusk and they will then be relieved by the 34th Division.

" You will do the support on the line Fison (Brigade-Major) is giving you and Somerville (1st Bn. King's Own Regiment) the whole reserve and you will both come out to-morrow night.

" I think all that can be arranged but let me know if any difficulties arise.

" I don't think they should as I have told Portal (Household Battalion) and Lacon (1st Bn. R. Warwickshire Regiment) that I won't relieve till they are properly sorted out ! *

" Your reports have been excellent and I am most grateful for the good work you and the Battalion have done. I only wish I could have relieved you to-night.

" Yours,
" A. CARTON DE WIART."

At 6.0 p.m. on the 13th, the 12th Brigade was relieved and the Battalion came back to Leipzig Camp, west of the canal. There, arrangements for its comfort appear to have been decidedly bad as it was one of four battalions sitting in a bare waste of mud. However, the men retained there the same cheerful demeanour which no efforts of the weather contrived to break down whether in the line or out.

* The difficulties under existing conditions besetting these, and all other, unhappy commanding officers have already been pointed out.

On the 14th the Battalion marched to Elverdinghe to entrain there for Proven, but, when drawn up preparatory to moving off, two hostile aeroplanes bombed the camp, causing eleven casualties.

Battle casualties during the last tour had been Captain R. Leetham, 2nd-Lieutenant J. B. Greenup and thirty-one other ranks killed; 2nd-Lieutenant C. R. Philip and one hundred other ranks wounded, with twenty-six missing.

On the 15th the Battalion marched to billets in the Rue de Bruges, Poperinghe, and on the 18th entrained at Peselhoek for Marœuil, whence it marched to Warlus. The First Battalion was now back in the Third Army and had finished with the Third Battle of Ypres.

The prolonged struggle which began on July 31st came to an official end with the Second Battle of Passchendaele, lasting from October 26th to November 10th and resulting in the capture of that village, the name of which is commonly associated with the whole three and a half months' fighting.

Although no Battalion of the Rifle Brigade was engaged in any major attack after that of October 12th, the Second Battalion was to be present during the activity which was maintained for some weeks after the official close of offensive operations.

**The Second
Battalion.**

In Kortepyp Camp near Neuve Eglise the Second Battalion remained training until September 11th, when it moved into brigade support at Red Lodge, under Hill 63 near Ploegsteert Wood, until the 19th, when it moved into the line in the St. Yves-Warneton sector. Here on the 23rd the enemy attempted a raid, but without success, as no German entered our trench and five enemy dead were left in front of it; on the other hand, the Battalion lost 2nd-Lieutenants C. B. Matheson (who only joined forty-eight hours previously), G. Gamble, and two sergeants killed and five other ranks wounded.

On the 27th the Battalion moved back to Camp de Seule on the Bailleul-Armentières road, where it remained training until October 13th.

During September, in addition to those recorded above, casualties were 2nd-Lieutenant C. H. Cooke and fifteen other ranks killed, and Captain A. H. Curtis, M.C., 2nd-Lieutenant H. A. Barker, and forty other ranks wounded, caused mostly by shell and mortar fire.

During this month and the beginning of October the following Honours and Awards were received:—Bar to D.S.O., Lieut.-Colonel Hon. R. Brand; M.C., Captain A. H. Curtis, Captain H. H. Elliott, R.A.M.C., and 2nd-Lieutenant E. F. Ratliff. Also one Bar to the D.C.M., one D.C.M., two

Bars to the M.M., fourteen M.M.s and one M.S.M. (for gallantry and devotion to duty during bombing practice).

On October 13th the Battalion moved into brigade reserve at Romarin, where the Transport of the First Battalion spent the winter of 1914-15, and was employed there training and finding large working-parties for the R.E. until the 21st, when it went back into the Warneton sector of the front line.

During this tour, on the 25th, 2nd-Lieutenant J. E. Lund took out a patrol of two men; when three-quarters of the way across No-Man's Land, leaving the men, he proceeded alone to the enemy's wire and there engaged the garrison of this trench. After a spirited fight with revolver and bombs the officer returned to his men, having shot one German with his revolver and himself received a slight wound in the wrist.

On the 28th 2nd-Lieutenant E. B. Anstie, with a party of twenty-five, raided the enemy trenches which they succeeded in entering; one German was killed but the remainder ran away, so the party returned with five other ranks slightly wounded and one missing, who was believed to have been blown up by a shell.

Next day the Battalion was relieved and returned to camp at de Seule, having, during the tour, lost five other ranks killed and twenty wounded, apart from those already mentioned.

Ten uneventful days were spent during which two Military Medals were awarded and in a Brigade Boxing Tournament A/Corporal Dorow won the Welter and C.Q.M.S. Bingham the Heavy Weight.

On November 12th the Battalion moved west to near Vieux Berquin until the 16th, when it entrained at Caestre for Ypres and thence to bivouac near Wieltje.

Next day it moved into the line north-west of Passchendaele, relieving the 47th Canadian Infantry Battalion. During the relief and for the tour of forty-eight hours there was heavy shelling, "heavier," according to the Diary, "than on any previous occasion." Whilst in the line the Battalion advanced its line in the centre, straightening out a re-entrant, but on being relieved on the 19th had lost 2nd-Lieutenants A. G. Tyndall and A. F. A. Woodward and thirty-seven other ranks killed; 2nd-Lieutenant J. E. Lund and eighty-three other ranks wounded and twenty-two missing. The remainder of the month was spent training at Brandhoek until on the 30th the Battalion was in camp near Ypres and about to go into the line again.

Not only into the line again but to make an attack. This was to be carried out by the 25th Brigade to the north of Passchendaele and by the 32nd Division on the left.

The Second
Battalion.
Venison Trench.
December 2nd,
1917.

According to the plan of attack the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. would be on the right and also forming a defensive flank to keep touch with the division on the right ; the 2nd Bn. Lincolnshire Regt. would be in the centre and the Second Battalion on the left, the 1st Bn. Royal Irish Rifles being in reserve.

The brigade's objective was a line about three hundred yards away containing two redoubts of which the northern, known as Venison Trench, was to be the Second Battalion's principal objective.

On the evening of December 1st the Battalion moved up and it was not long before the C.O., Colonel Brand, was wounded and command devolved upon Lieutenant G. H. G. Anderson, M.C. Forming-up places had previously been marked out and the assembly took place with comparative ease. Zero hour was 1.55 a.m. on December 2nd.

There was a bright moon shining behind the attacking troops and there was visibility up to five hundred yards. When the attack started the enemy put down practically no barrage, such shelling as there was being directed on to the back areas. According to the Battalion account the enemy had obviously watched the process of forming up and had pushed forward parties of men and machine-guns to well inside the line of our barrage.

Consequently when the attack was launched it came under intensive machine-gun fire from the very beginning.

The right and centre battalions made fair progress but the Second Battalion was in difficulties at once. On its left was a cottage called Teal Cottage, which it had been thought was in British occupation and was to have marked the left of the forming-up tape ; unfortunately, when the taping-party started work before the Battalion came up into the line, it was found that Teal Cottage was in enemy hands and its capture was to be an early task of the 32nd Division.

Immediately after zero two machine-guns were seen firing from Teal Cottage, others from the redoubt in front which was strongly held, others from both flanks, and others again using indirect fire from further back.

Casualties soon became heavy and, the 32nd Division having failed to capture Teal Cottage, a defensive flank had to be formed to keep in touch with it.

Accordingly the attacking companies, "A," "B" and "C," perforce dug in on a line about one hundred yards from the original front line.

The remainder of the brigade had met with varying success, having failed to take and hold its objective but having made some one hundred and fifty prisoners.

During the day of the 2nd the enemy's attitude was aggressive and several attempts were made to raid the Battalion's posts, all, however, unsuccessful.

In the late afternoon there was a threatened enemy counter-attack on a large scale ; this did not materialize possibly owing to our S.O.S. barrage which was immediately put down.

That night the Second Battalion was relieved by the Eighth Battalion and moved to Hasler Camp, St. Jean, and on the following day, December 3rd, went by rail from St. Jean to Wizernes and thence marched to billets in Acquin, seven miles west of St. Omer.

Casualties were Captain E. F. Ratliff, M.C., 2nd-Lieutenants W. Morrison, J. Brooker and twenty-one other ranks killed ; 2nd-Lieutenants J. B. Macgeorge, D. P. Jones, L. M. King-Harman, D. F. W. Baden-Powell, H. F. Cranswick, W. Bridgeman and seventy-two other ranks wounded, with twenty-one missing.

The End of
"Third Ypres." The Third Battle of Ypres closed on November 10th. Other Battalions of the Regiment were in, or about to re-enter, the Ypres area but the official ending of the battle put no period to the miseries of the troops occupying that dreadful morass in winter, albeit their presence there no longer entitled them to the battle-honour.

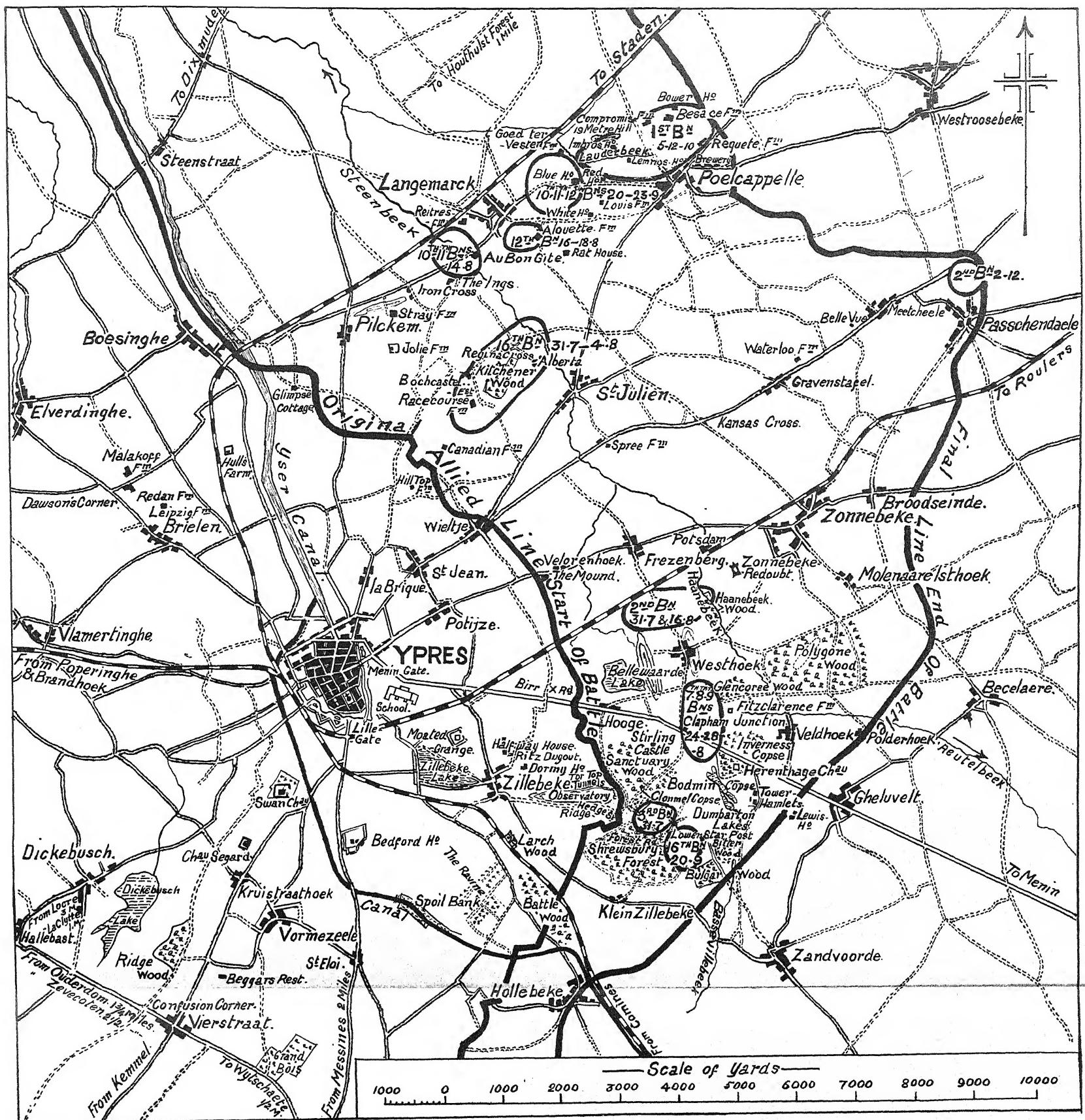
That, however, was small matter as each of the eleven Battalions of the Regiment had already won the honour for the Rifle Brigade.

So, in November, finished the Summer Campaign of 1917!

Before picking up the threads and tracing the stories of the several Battalions up to this time it may be more convenient to proceed at once with the record of those—the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth—which were to take part in the two remaining Battles of the year—to be known as The Operations on the Cambrai Front.

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.

31st July-10th November, 1917.



CHAPTER VI

THE OPERATIONS ON THE CAMBRAI FRONT. THE TENTH, ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH BATTALIONS.*

ON October 1st the 20th Division was completing its move south, which was somewhat delayed by enemy air activity over and round Poperinghe. As a consequence the Tenth Battalion had an eight hours' wait at Hopoutre "enlivened by enemy aircraft carrying out their usual nightly raid on Poperinghe," and the Twelfth Battalion arrived at Bapaume some hours before its "advanced party."

On arrival in the new area the Tenth and Eleventh Battalions went into camp near Beaulencourt, two to three miles south-east of Bapaume, and the Twelfth Battalion at Barastre, two miles further east.

On the 20th Division relieving the 40th in the line all three brigades were in front line, the 59th being in the centre and the 60th on the left, and on October 5th the Twelfth Battalion moved into the support line in the Villers Plouich-Beaucamp area, followed on the 7th by the Tenth and Eleventh, which became, respectively, the right and left front-line battalions in the Gonnelle-Villers Plouich sector.

No useful purpose would be served by describing in detail the month's routine. Suffice it that the usual round was carried out but in conditions much more congenial than those recently experienced further north. Trenches were, on the whole, good, safe, and provided with adequate dug-out accommodation. There was little hostile activity beyond sniping, and at that the Riflemen soon gained a mastery, and nightly patrols found no trace of the enemy.

Whilst out of the line in reserve the Twelfth Battalion was told that unless an identification was obtained during the next tour a raid must be carried out; during the tour a deserter fell into the Battalion lines from Heaven and the German 27th Res. I.R., so all was well.

During the month the front line was visited by many distinguished officers, including the Third Army Commander (General Hon. Sir Julian Byng) and the IIIrd Corps Commander (General Sir W. Pulteney).

These visits, according to the Tenth Battalion Diary, presaged a "change

* Map will be found facing p. 190.

in dispositions" ; in a sense it is probable that they did, but the extent of that change will be seen presently.

The Tenth Battalion records the following Honours and Awards : Military Cross, two ; Distinguished Conduct Medal, one ; Military Medal, sixteen.

The Eleventh Battalion records but one such happy event, 2nd-Lieutenant W. F. Watson being awarded the Military Cross, whilst the Twelfth Battalion mentions none at all.

Casualties, happily, can be recorded as negligible.

At this time the 60th Brigade suffered a loss in the transfer of Brig.-General Hon. L. J. P. Butler, C.M.G., D.S.O., to command of a brigade in the Guards Division ; he was succeeded by Brig.-General F. J. Duncan, C.M.G., D.S.O.

November began quietly. Until the 6th the Tenth Battalion was in divisional reserve and then moved into the line for a quiet tour until the 12th. On this date the Diary refers to a coming big attack with tanks and adds that "for the first time a serious attempt at secrecy is being made."

From November 1st to the 5th the Eleventh Battalion was in support and on the 6th moved into the line on Welsh Ridge, east of Villers Plouich.

The only event to record during the tour is an enemy raid in the early hours of the 9th. The raid resulted in the capture of one man and ten casualties from artillery and trench-mortar fire, but an added misfortune was that, at the time of the raid, there was an officer's patrol out and the commander, 2nd-Lieutenant McCormick, was killed in No-Man's Land.

On the 12th the Battalion went back to Heudicourt, less two companies attached to another battalion in the line ; these rejoined on the 17th.

The Twelfth Battalion went into the line on the 1st and the Diary mentions that special attention was paid to wiring the support line with a view to its becoming the main line of resistance, the front line being held by day entirely by Lewis-gun posts.

On November 3rd a very successful patrol action was carried out by Captain F. H. Farmer and a party of sixteen other ranks. The patrol lay up at the north-east corner of Boar Copse, some five hundred yards outside our line, and ambushed an enemy patrol, killing three Germans and taking one badly wounded prisoner, a machine-gun, and a rifle : casualties to the patrol were three slightly wounded and one badly, the latter and the prisoner both dying afterwards. Two days after, at the second attempt, one of the dead Germans was brought in and proved to belong to the same regiment as the before-mentioned deserter—the 27th Res. I.R.

On the 6th the Battalion moved to Dessart Camp, "a new one but quite good."

From here the Battalion was taken for a novel and interesting trip by 'bus to Wailly, south-west of Arras, to do some training with tanks. On the afternoon of the 8th, in twenty-two 'buses, it travelled by Peronne and Bapaume and "it was very interesting to connect up all the country where the Battalion had been last year during mid-winter." After a day and a half of training with the tanks the Battalion, on the 9th, returned by 'bus to Dessart Camp.

On the 12th the Battalion went back into the line until the 18th, when it was relieved by the 8th Bn. Norfolk Regt., of the 6th Division, and returned to Heudicourt. During this tour signs of the coming offensive were obvious to all on the British side of the line. Each night the heavy artillery, and its tractors, could be heard rumbling up, and later the tanks as well, and bursts of machine and Lewis-gun fire were opened to drown the sound.

Roads were being widened, camouflaged dumps of 18-pdr. ammunition scattered everywhere, and the Decauville railways running feverishly under the management of their American personnel.

Still the enemy appeared to be unconscious of all this activity and remained, for the most part, quiet.

* In his Despatch, Sir Douglas Haig gives his reasons for selecting Cambrai as the scene of an attack. These were shortly that this sector was thinly held by the enemy owing to the French and British attacks elsewhere and that the country was suitable for the employment of tanks with adequate cover for the assembly of the latter in the form of woods —such as Havrincourt Wood and others.

"If," says the Despatch, "after breaking through the German defence systems on this front, we could secure Bourlon to the north, and establish a good flank position to the east, in the direction of Cambrai, we should be well placed to exploit the situation locally between Bourlon and the Sensée River and to the north-west. The capture of Cambrai itself was subsidiary to this operation, the object of our advance towards that town being primarily to cover our flank and puzzle the enemy regarding our intentions."

After discussing the desirability, or otherwise, of making an attack, having regard to the general situation of the Allies and to the number of troops available, Sir Douglas decided that, "despite the various limiting factors, I could muster enough force to make a first success sufficiently

sure to justify undertaking the attack, but that the degree to which this success could be followed up must depend on circumstances."

The Despatch continues :—

" The general plan of attack was to dispense with previous artillery preparation, and to depend instead on tanks to smash through the enemy's wire of which there was a great quantity protecting his trenches.

" As soon as the advance of the tanks and infantry, working in close co-operation, began, the artillery was to assist with counter-battery and barrage work ; but no previous registration of guns for this purpose could be permitted, as it would rouse the enemy's suspicions. The artillery of our new Armies was therefore necessarily subjected to a severe test in this operation, and proved itself entirely worthy of the confidence placed in it."

In this record there is no place for the doings of the Royal Artillery but, in the coming battle, the action of the 20th Divisional Artillery was certainly to justify the trust of the Commander-in-Chief.*

† " The infantry, tanks, and artillery thus working in combination were to endeavour to break through all the enemy's lines of defence on the first day. If this were successfully accomplished and the situation developed favourably, cavalry were then to be passed through to raid the enemy's communications, disorganize his system of command, damage his railways, and interfere as much as possible with the arrival of his reinforcements."

Above all things secrecy was essential.

" The German defences on this front had been greatly improved and extended since the opening of our offensive in April, and comprised three main systems of resistance.

" The first of these three trench systems, constituting part of the Hindenburg Line proper, ran in a general north-westerly direction for a distance of six miles from the Canal de l'Escaut at Banteux to Havrincourt. There it turned abruptly north along the line of the Canal du Nord for a distance of four miles to Mœuvres, thus forming a pronounced salient in the German front.

" In advance of the Hindenburg Line the enemy had constructed a series of strong forward positions, including La Vacquerie and the north-eastern corner of Havrincourt Wood. Behind it, and at distances respectively varying from a little less to rather more than a mile, and from three-and-a-half to four-and-a-half miles, lay the second and third main German

* Vide "The History of the Twentieth Light) Division," Chapter IX.

† Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch.

systems, known as the Hindenburg Reserve Line and the Beaurevoir, Masnières, Marquion Lines."

In the attack the 20th Division was the centre division of the IIIrd Corps with the 12th Division on the right and the 6th Division on the left; the 29th Division was in corps reserve.

In the 20th Division the 61st Brigade was on the right, the 60th Brigade on the left, whilst the 59th Brigade was detailed for a special task.

There were three objectives; the Blue Line which included the Hindenburg Line (so far as the 20th Division was concerned) from eight hundred yards north-east of La Vacquerie to the Villers Plouich-Marcoing railway. Next the Brown Line including the Hindenburg Support from a point in the sunken road which joins La Vacquerie with Les Rues Vertes some three thousand yards distant from the former place to a point on the railway twelve hundred yards south of Marcoing Junction.

The first objective was to be taken by the two leading battalions in each assaulting brigade and the second by the two support battalions.

The third objective, the Red Line, was to be the task of the 59th Brigade and consisted firstly of taking and holding the two canal crossings west of Masnières and one south of that place, and, secondly, of forming a defensive flank southwards through Les Rues Vertes for some two thousand five hundred yards until joining up with the 12th Division which would continue the defensive flank.

The canal crossings were to be held until the arrival of the 29th Division and the defensive flank was to protect the flank of that division in its advance on Masnières and Marcoing.

The 61st Brigade was allotted thirty-six tanks and the 60th Brigade twenty-four. As soon as the Brown Line had been captured ten tanks of those with the 61st Brigade were to be at the disposal of the 59th Brigade. Zero hour was at 6.20 a.m.

As the 60th Brigade was one of the assaulting brigades it will be convenient to follow first the fortunes of the Twelfth Battalion.

The Twelfth
Battalion.
November 20th,
1917.

At 5 p.m. the Twelfth Battalion left camp at Heudicourt and arrived at Villers Plouich at 9 p.m. There had been two unexpected halts due to congestion on the road, and to stationary trains blocking the tank crossing-places over the light railway, but it had been possible to issue teas on the way up.

* Marquion (on the Arras road six and a half miles west-north-west of Cambrai) must not be confused with Marcoing.

For the first objective were the 6th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry on the right and the 12th Bn. 60th on the left, each assisted by nine tanks of "A" Battalion.

For the second objective the 6th Bn. King's Shropshire Light Infantry was on the right with the Twelfth Battalion on the left, each to be assisted by three tanks and all those allotted to the first objective. The Battalion, with its left on the railway, had a frontage of about six hundred yards and a journey to the objective of nearly two miles from the original front line.

The following account is taken from the Battalion War Diary :—

At ten minutes before zero, from their forming-up place one thousand yards from the German front line, the tanks moved off followed by the infantry. Apparently they were not noticed for some time as there was only a little machine-gun fire. At zero all guns opened ; heavy howitzers had been brought up on previous nights to within one thousand yards of the enemy front line and field-guns and howitzers still closer. The German barrage was "slow in starting and very ineffectual."

At 6.40 a.m. the Battalion moved off to its appointed place where it was formed behind the tanks. The right tank was followed by "A" Company, the centre by "B" and the left by "D" ; each company with one platoon moving seventy yards behind the tank in column of half-platoons in file and the remaining platoons each at fifty yards distance.

"C" Company was in reserve, one platoon following each front line company at one hundred yards distance. Companies were, presumably, organized on a three-platoon basis. All were formed up by 7.0 a.m., by which time the first batches of prisoners had come in.

When, at 7.20 a.m., the Battalion moved off, tanks of the first wave could be seen moving down the Hindenburg Line, including those of the 6th Division, across the valley on the left. The two leading battalions had captured their objectives, except for a small piece in the centre, and there was a little machine-gun fire from the right rear where a gun had been overlooked.

After halting just short of the first objective the Battalion started off at 8.50 a.m. bound for its own objective. "D" Company, on the left, met with practically no opposition, the enemy in that sector either running away or surrendering. "B" Company, in the centre, was somewhat hampered by machine-gun fire from the right flank, but pushed on to its final objective, one platoon working its way up the Hindenburg Support to get on the flank of a machine-gun nest which was holding up the right company. That company, "A," had to fight its way almost from the start as its tank went too far to the left, while the tank of the 6th Bn. K.S.L.I., on the right, had gone off down the La Vacquerie valley, leaving

a gap of at least five hundred yards between tanks until the K.S.L.I. could recover theirs.

With the help of covering fire from Lewis-guns and rifle-grenades and with bombers working up the communication trench the company got to within 200 yards of the Hindenburg Support Line, where it was held up by a nest of five machine-guns and a trench-mortar. Captain Fraser, the company commander, managed to get hold of a stray tank which at once advanced on the nest ; he also sent a serjeant to explain the situation to "B" Company and the supporting platoon of "C" Company. A party was at once organized to work up and take the nest in flank.

The tank came up to within fifty yards of the nest when it received a direct hit from the trench-mortar, which killed some of the crew and severely wounded the officer and the remaining men. The officer, Captain R. W. L. Wain, scrambled out of the tank and rushed at the enemy with a Lewis-gun, and, at the same time, "B" Company rushed the position from the flank. Captain Wain was, unfortunately, killed in the mêlée, but the survivors of the enemy immediately surrendered. Only one of the five machine-guns was fit for use, but it was immediately turned on to parties of the enemy who were running away.

Captain Fraser's company then reached the final objective without further difficulty, at the same time mopping up the ground on its right flank ; this company, alone, took over one hundred and thirty prisoners, a trench-mortar, and six machine-guns during the advance.

It was 11.0 a.m. when Captain Fraser reported that he was on his final objective, adding in his report that his right was in the air but that tanks were coming up—apparently those retrieved by the K.S.L.I.

Posts were at once established beyond the objective and "D" Company sent forward a patrol for eight hundred yards to the outskirts of Marcoing, where the tanks had already collected.

At about 11.30 a.m. a brigade of the 29th Division passed through the Battalion and, an hour later, tanks and troops of that division could be seen moving on to the north whilst, at the same time, a field artillery brigade took up a position just behind the Battalion's line of posts. At 1.15 p.m. a cavalry brigade passed through, moving on Marcoing.

During the afternoon there was a re-adjustment of companies, "D" and "B" holding the line of the final objective with posts out in front, while "C" and "A" came back into support and reserve, respectively.

There was still a good deal of machine-gun fire from the Beaurevoir-Masnières Line and it was apparent that the high ground near Rumilly was still in enemy hands. The cavalry came back at dusk and bivouacked round Battalion H.Q., which was now in the Hindenburg Line.

The total casualties for the day were 2nd-Lieutenant Holliday killed, Captain G. F. Visser wounded, and, of other ranks, under forty all told.

The Tenth
and Eleventh
Battalions.

November 20th,
1917.

The plan of action for the 59th Brigade has already been outlined ; there remain to record the orders issued to carry out the plan.

From its concentration area, about Gouzeaucourt, the 59th Brigade would at zero hour begin the move to its assembly positions ; these, in the case of the Tenth and Eleventh Battalions, were in the front-line trenches. At 9.5 a.m. the brigade would move forward in artillery formation covered by an advanced guard and on a one-battalion front. The Eleventh Battalion would lead, followed by the Tenth and the remaining battalions of the brigade at five hundred yards distance, the advance being made up the valley running north-eastwards from La Vacquerie. Two troops of the 1st/1st Northumberland Hussars would accompany the Eleventh Battalion as far as the Brown Line, when they would push forward and endeavour to establish posts on the Bonavis-Crèvecœur spur.

The Eleventh Battalion would detach one company to seize the canal-crossings between Masnières and Marcoing, until the arrival of the 29th Division ; two companies were to seize and hold the bridge-head south of Masnières, or at least to cover it effectively from the west, and they would also be responsible for mopping-up Les Rues Vertes.

The Tenth Battalion would establish itself from a point in the sunken road two thousand yards south of Les Rues Vertes to within five hundred yards of that place, where it would connect with the Eleventh Battalion. When troops of the 29th Division were across the canal and "as the situation on the far side develops satisfactorily" the Tenth Battalion would push forward to the Bonavis-Crèvecœur spur, clearing Les Rues des Vignes by patrols. In conformity with this move the Eleventh Battalion would advance to the northern slopes of the spur and extend the Tenth Battalion line as far as the canal, near St. Waast, keeping in touch with the right of the 29th Division.

After breakfast at 5.0 a.m. the Eleventh Battalion moved off at 6.20 a.m. in columns of platoons at one hundred yards distance.

After reaching Farm Ravine, one mile west of La Vacquerie, there was some shell-fire which caused about fifteen casualties, but assembly was complete by 8.15 a.m. At 9.0 a.m. the companies formed up in columns of platoons (two platoons in each company), "C" Company on the right, "B" on the left, with "A" as right support and "D" left.

Covered by a screen of scouts the Battalion advanced along the northern slope of the La Vacquerie valley, leaving the village on the right. The Blue Line was crossed at 10 a.m. and platoons split up into columns of sections as the enemy, though not employing many guns, was placing his barrage well. The Brown Line was crossed at 10.30 a.m., the Battalion continuing to advance behind the scouts in open order in waves. At this point the situation was as follows.

The Blue and Brown Lines had been captured and mopped up by the 60th and 61st Brigades; the Tenth Battalion was beginning to deploy on the southern slope of La Vacquerie valley and units of the 29th Division were following the Eleventh Battalion closely. Fourteen tanks could be counted in the valley in advance of the Brown Line, but the ridge on the north side of the valley barred any view as to how the attack was progressing on the left or how large a gap existed between the Battalion and the 6th Division. Hostile machine-guns and snipers attempted to hold up the advance by long-range fire, but the approach of infantry in strength accompanied by tanks caused the enemy either to retire or to give himself up. Shelling, however, continued, the tanks being the object of very deliberate and accurate fire. To clear up the situation on the left a patrol of one officer and four men was sent out and soon gained touch with the 29th Division.

"B" Company continued its advance to the objective but met with opposition from a strong-point, south of Marcoing Copse. 2nd-Lieutenant E. H. Weston, commanding the company, quickly organized an encircling attack by Lewis-guns and bombers, using some old trenches, and the garrison of one hundred and fifty at once surrendered, being escorted to the rear by the 29th Division. About 12 noon some enemy were seen to run away towards the canal, others who remained being bombed in dug-outs and shelters. After this there was no further opposition and the 29th Division was now able to cross the canal unopposed.

At 1.30 p.m. "B" and "D" Companies, the latter not having been engaged, were in the sunken road, south of Les Rues Vertes, while officers reconnoitred positions for the defensive flank on Crèveceur spur.

Meanwhile "C" Company, advancing on Les Rues Vertes from the south and south-east, met some opposition from a machine-gun; this was dealt with by a tank and there was no further trouble until the company entered Les Rues Vertes. Here there was an hour's street-fighting with some difficult snap-shooting at enemy dodging round corners, and the whole company became committed to clearing the village and guarding houses, streets and approaches.

Scouts under 2nd-Lieutenant Pugh pushed up the main street towards the bridge on the Cambrai road, which was reached at 12.25 p.m. Both

the river and canal bridges appeared then to be intact, though it is probable that one bridge had been partially destroyed. Seven or eight scouts crossed the river bridge unopposed but came under machine-gun fire from Masnières, which caused three casualties.

The Broken Bridge About 12.40 p.m. a tank arrived ; after satisfying himself that the bridges were intact the tank commander at Masnières.

took on board some Riflemen armed with bombs and started across the canal bridge. Unfortunately the bridge collapsed, causing the tank to become wedged between the broken ends of the bridge and blocking the crossing.

This incident, as events turned out, was to have a most important influence on the course of the whole battle.

By this time three more tanks and large numbers of the 29th Division had arrived in Les Rues Vertes, causing much congestion.

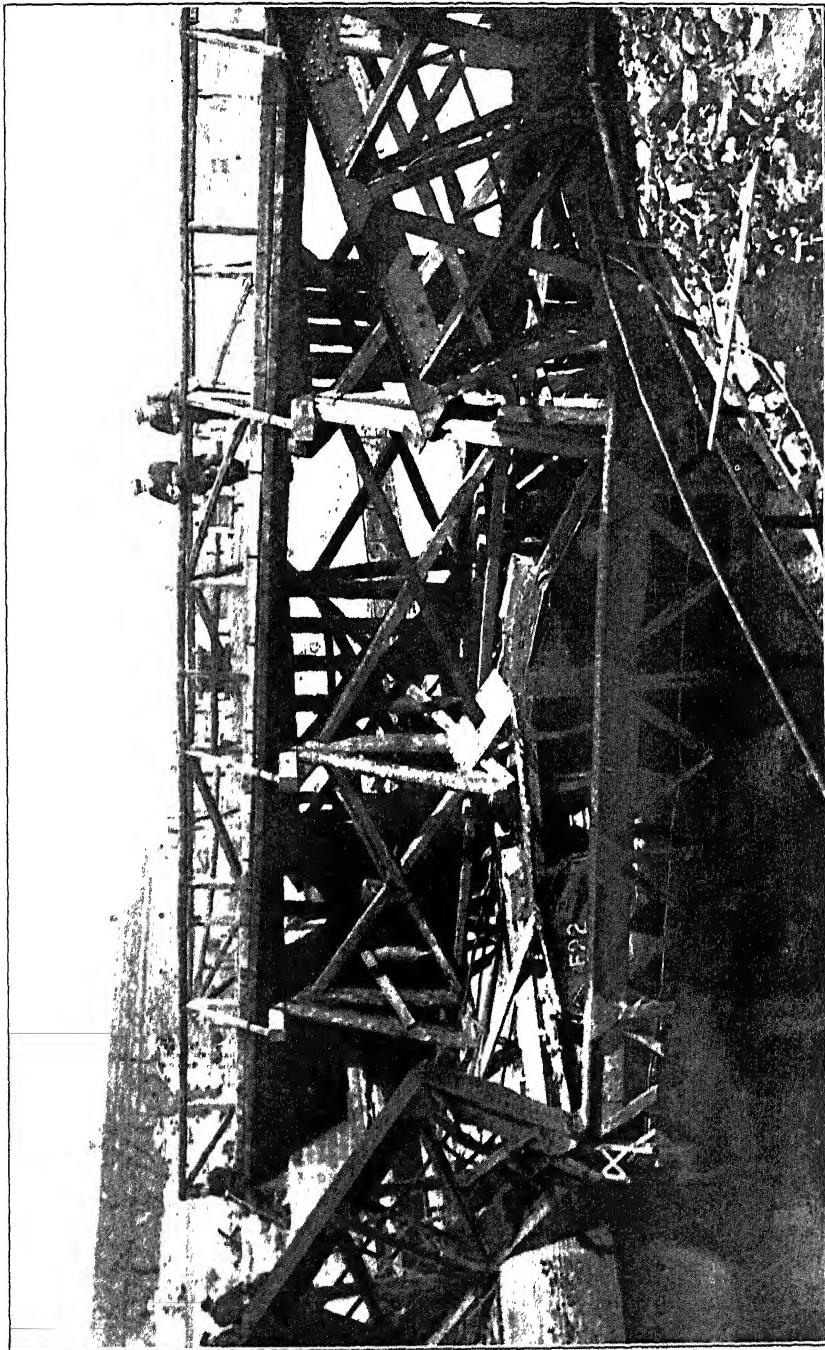
Two more bridges, one to the west (which was not marked on the map) and another to the east, were discovered and pointed out to the 29th Division, which, however, does not appear to have made much use of them. The Canadian Cavalry Brigade galloped into Les Rues Vertes, adding to the congestion and drawing shell-fire, but, finding the main bridge destroyed, withdrew ; later a squadron passed over the easternmost bridge and did excellent work, including charging a battery, but otherwise only a few small parties of cavalry, unspecified, crossed by the bridges above and below Masnières.

By 4.30 p.m. "C" Company was concentrated under cover in the houses south-west of Masnières, after handing over its various posts and patrols in Les Rues Vertes to the 29th Division.

By this time also "A" and "B" Companies were dug in in posts on a north and south line some twelve hundred to fifteen hundred yards east of the Bonavis-Masnières road and running for eight hundred yards from its left on the river. "D" Company was dug in in support and the right of the Eleventh Battalion was in touch with the left of the Tenth, to whose movements during the past ten hours attention may now be turned.

So far the Tenth Battalion had had an uneventful but successful day.

During its advance there was some slight shelling and machine-gun fire but no very serious casualties resulted. On arriving at a point some three-hundred yards short of the Brown Line there was a momentary check while the two leading brigades secured their objectives, but there was little delay and the Battalion advanced to its final objective, the change of direction being successfully accomplished. A further advance could have been made but for the fact that the divisions on the flanks were a considerable distance behind and out of touch. The remainder of the day appears to



THE BRIDGE AT MASNIERES.

Collapsed under the British tank—20th November, 1917.

German Official Photograph.

have been without incident for the Tenth Battalion, but during the night both Battalions were ordered to advance.

The Tenth Battalion took up a line about the cemetery at the north end of Les Rues des Vignes, while the Eleventh pushed forward and occupied the bridge seven hundred and fifty yards south-east of Mon Plaisir Farm, establishing one post on the north side of the canal and two on the south covering the bridge and the lock immediately east of it. A line of posts was established south of the canal, but Crèvecœur could not be entered as the enemy was in occupation of the passages across the river. An enemy machine-gun team was, however, surprised and captured with its gun. "C" Company became support company and "D" moved up into the outpost line.

At 6.20 a.m. on November 21st the Tenth Battalion, with a view to gaining the bridge-head in Les Rues des Vignes, attacked the village and occupied most of it successfully, in spite of opposition, about 8.0 a.m. Neither side actually occupied the bridge but it was covered both by our own and the enemy machine-gun fire.

About an hour later the enemy, who was still in the north and in some strength, worked round in rear of the Battalion and forced three companies to fight their way back to their former positions near the cemetery. This incident was observed by the Eleventh Battalion on the left and caused some consternation, but only momentarily. One company maintained its position, covering the bridge-head with Lewis-gun fire.

November 21st, Meanwhile, at daybreak on the 21st, the Eleventh
1917. Battalion re-established touch with the 29th Division in
 Mon Plaisir Farm. Later this post was found to have been evacuated and
 was occupied by the Battalion.

The 29th Division, however, not having advanced down the Beaurevoir Line towards Crèvecœur, the positions taken up by the Battalion during the night were found to be untenable owing to enfilade machine-gun fire from the north and were, perforce, readjusted.

In the evening the Tenth Battalion, with one company of the 10th Bn. 60th, again advanced from the cemetery line, the 60th succeeding in entering the village and gaining touch with the company there. The two companies then mopped up the village, killing several of the enemy and capturing eleven. The village was then evacuated, a line being taken up on the open sloping ground just to the west of it.

That afternoon the Eleventh Battalion had become support battalion to the 11th Bn. 60th, which passed through on its way to attack Crèvecœur.

On the night of November 22nd/23rd the 59th Brigade was relieved by the 60th Brigade and the two Battalions went back to the Hindenburg Support Line until the 25th, when they moved to newly-pitched camps, near Farm Ravine, the 59th Brigade being now in divisional reserve.

Casualties were, in the Tenth Battalion, Captain A. B. Lane, 2nd-Lieutenant W. H. Hill and twenty-five other ranks killed, and Major Hon. L. H. Tennyson, 2nd Lieutenants W. G. Fergusson, R. A. Burton and eighty-six other ranks wounded, with twenty missing; in the Eleventh Battalion, of the twenty officers and four hundred and twenty-seven other ranks who went into action, 2nd-Lieutenant W. J. McCormick and twenty-one other ranks were killed, whilst two officers and one hundred and three other ranks were wounded.

The Tenth and Eleventh Battalions may be left for the moment, resting, refitting, and improving the accommodation in their camps, in order to return to the Twelfth Battalion, last heard of on the evening of the 20th on the left of the 20th Division's final objective.

The Twelfth
Battalion.
November 21st,
1917.

On the 21st the Twelfth Battalion was ordered to move to some German practice-trenches further to the east and from twelve hundred to one thousand yards south of Marcoing Copse. Reconnaissance discovered two German covered-in gun-positions capable of holding the complete Battalion and these were occupied at dusk.

At 2.0 a.m. on the 22nd orders were received that the 60th Brigade would relieve the 59th that night and that the Battalion would relieve the 10th Bn. 60th from the cemetery (on the spur five hundred yards north of Les Rues des Vignes) south-westwards along the spur for a distance of some two thousand yards to Lateau Wood. Accordingly that evening the Battalion moved up and took over the line with "C" Company on the right, "B" in the centre and "D" on the left, with "A" in reserve. A gap of five hundred yards was found between "B" and "D" Companies and posts were sent out to fill it. The line formed part of a sharp salient and was exposed to machine-gun fire from the Masnières-Beaurevoir Line to the left rear.

The 10th Bn. 60th was to have blown up the canal bridge in Les Rues des Vignes that evening but was unable to do so as the enemy was found to be occupying the village.

The next day orders were received to prepare plans to blow up this bridge, but the scheme was first postponed by higher authority and finally abandoned. During that day and the 24th there was a certain amount of enemy shelling and some air-activity, whilst, on the latter day, 2nd-

Lieutenant Henderson was unlucky enough to be hit in the leg by a machine-gun bullet whilst superintending foot-rubbing at "Stand-to."

On November 25th there were readjustments on the brigade front which did not affect the Battalion, but on the 26th minor changes led to "D" and "A" Companies holding the outpost line in posts with "B" and "C" in the main line, where such had been dug, or in old gun-pits.

These moves were the result of an order for the 20th Division to consolidate a strong defensive position consisting of a main line of defence covered by outposts. Very little of the main line had been dug, but it had been wired throughout.

The Battalion did what digging it could during the two days it was in the line, which were quiet except for some mild shelling. One shell near Battalion H.Q. wounded two A.S.C. drivers and stampeded their horses; the outfit was found by the adjutant half a mile away and, as he was driving it back, another shell wounded the two horses, so the wagon was man-handled out of the way.

During the 27th a good deal of enemy movement was observed near Rumilly.

On the 28th the Battalion was relieved by the 6th Bn. K.S.L.I., going back into brigade reserve in the Hindenburg Line, and on the night of the 29th the 59th Brigade relieved the 60th. In consequence the Twelfth Battalion was relieved by the Eleventh and went back to a camp in the Fifteen Ravine area, between Gouzeaucourt and Villers Plouich, where it had settled in and finished teas by 10.0 p.m.

On the 29th, the day it came out of the line, the 60th Brigade issued its defence scheme for the Les Rue des Vignes sector. In this scheme the two danger-points were considered to be the junction with the 12th Division on the right and the cemetery on the left.*

The outpost line of the 20th Division on November 30th formed a pronounced salient with its right near Lateau Wood, its apex at the cemetery, north of Les Rues des Vignes, and its left on the canal south of Mon Plaisir Farm. The main line from Lateau Wood ran north-east for one thousand yards, close behind the outpost line, and then turning due north, ran as far as the canal.

* To meet the difficulty of observation along the canal a F.O.O. was posted, facing east, in an old German trench leading from the canal to Lateau Wood: he was in direct communication with H.Q. 91st F.A. Brigade which was with General Duncan's H.Q.

To anticipate, this F.O.O., soon after 7 a.m. on November 30th, reported hostile infantry advancing on Lateau Wood. Shortly afterwards, however, he was wounded and he and his signallers were captured.

The 59th Brigade held the southern half of the sector, with its left at the cemetery, and was disposed with, in front line, the 10th Bn. 60th on the right, the 11th Bn. 60th on the left, the Tenth Battalion in support in a ravine south of Les Rues Vertes and some half-mile in rear of the main line, and the Eleventh Battalion in reserve in the Hindenburg Line, north-east of La Vacquerie.

THE GERMAN COUNTER-ATTACK. November 30th, 1917.

For reasons which will shortly become apparent it is convenient to record first the early events of this day as they presented themselves to the 59th Brigade as a whole and then to follow the stories of the Tenth and Eleventh Battalions.

At 7.0 a.m. on November 30th the battalions of the 59th Brigade were disposed as above, but command had not yet passed between the brigadiers concerned; as a fact Brig.-General Hyslop had proceeded on sick-leave and had been succeeded by Lieut.-Colonel Troyte-Bullock (7th Bn. Somerset L.I.).

At this hour, in a heavy mist, heavy artillery fire was noticed and reported by companies to both front-line and support battalions; it seemed to be well on the right and the brigade front was said by company commanders to be quiet, several messages from companies to Battalion H.Q. between 7.0 a.m. and 7.30 a.m. showing no change.

At about 7.30 a.m., however, the enemy shelling appeared to spread on to the 59th Brigade front and soon intensified; all communications between H.Q. of front battalions and companies being immediately cut.

The infantry attack against the brigade front was apparently launched shortly before 8.0 a.m., at which time the 59th and 60th Brigades were still each commanded by the other's brigadier. This attack was preceded by a considerable number of aeroplanes—thirty to fifty it was said—flying very low, firing machine-guns and dropping smoke-bombs to screen the advance of the infantry.

The attack appears to have been launched at the right of the main line and at the outpost line. The companies on the right of the main line found themselves surrounded as, simultaneously with the attack against them, the enemy appeared on their right rear. In the outpost line the cemetery position was outflanked from both flanks and the troops in that line began to fall back on the main line—in accordance with orders.

But, in so doing, they brought with them the enemy infantry, masking,

to a considerable extent, the fire from troops in the main line. This, in conjunction with the fact that the right flank of the main line had already gone, and that the left was being heavily pressed from the direction of the canal, made the position untenable and the main line was, perforce, evacuated, the troops having suffered very severe casualties from aeroplane machine-guns and infantry rifle and machine-gun fire.

It will be remembered that there had been neither time nor opportunity for much digging on the main line.

Headquarters of the two forward battalions fell back together, and, collecting as many men as could be gathered, attempted to make a stand in several places; pressure, however, was too heavy and the withdrawal was continued until the positions taken up by the reserve battalion, in the Hindenburg Support Line, were reached.

But before dealing with the situation of this Battalion—the Eleventh—that of the Tenth Battalion, in support, should first be considered.

The Tenth
Battalion
Annihilated.
November 30th,
1917.

Owing to the fact that all officers at Battalion H.Q. became casualties, the events of this day are uncertain, but the following account was compiled at the time from those of surviving company officers.

At 8.0 a.m., November 30th, an S.O.S. message from 12th Division, on the right, was received and transmitted to companies. A certain amount of hostile shelling was observed on our front line but it did not appear sufficient to indicate an enemy attack and seemed to be mostly on the right flank; at the same time enemy aircraft were very active.

Companies were in the act of "standing-to" when it was observed that the enemy had broken through on the right flank and was to be seen about one hundred yards behind it, and men were falling back.

Both flanks having apparently been turned, part of the Battalion withdrew to the La Vacquerie road, making a partial stand on the way at the main Cambrai road.

The remainder of the Battalion, under Captains T. H. Henderson (Adjutant), S. J. Pegler, and T. G. L. Ashwell, went forward about one hundred yards, Captain Henderson being killed and Captain Ashwell wounded. This party then withdrew across the La Vacquerie road, making a stand on the ridge behind. Here Captain Pegler, who was now commanding the Battalion, met a party of the 7th Bn. D.C.L.I. (support battalion of the 61st Brigade) under Major J. B. MacMillan who, assuming local command, ordered Captain Pegler to take his men to a trench in the Hin-

denburg system occupied by the 7th Bn. K.O.Y.L.I. (reserve battalion of the 61st Brigade) under Lieut.-Colonel J. T. Janson. At that point the enemy was held in check and the trench occupied until 9.0 p.m., when Captain Pegler obtained permission to rejoin his own brigade.

At 2.0 a.m. on December 1st, with 2nd-Lieutenants Scott, Dewar, East, and Johnson and twenty men, he reported to Lieut.-Colonel Priaulx of the 11th Bn. 60th who, at 6.0 p.m. the night before, had been placed in command of the four battalions of the 59th Brigade and whose H.Q. were in the Hindenburg Line, one thousand yards north of La Vacquerie. These remnants of the Tenth Battalion were then attached to the Eleventh Battalion and remained with it until relief.

At 7.50 a.m., November 30th, an S.O.S. signal message was received that the 12th Division, on the right, was being attacked.

The Eleventh
Battalion.
November 30th—
December 3rd,
1917.

At 8.15 a.m. an order from the 60th Brigade H.Q. (it will be remembered that the battalions of the 59th Brigade were under the orders of the 60th Brigade) was received to "stand-to" ready to move and, at 8.50 a.m., a further order for the Battalion to move to its "battle positions" on the Brown Line, i.e., in and beyond the Hindenburg Support Line.

As the companies moved forward to take up their positions it was evident that the German attack had extended to the 20th Division front and that the enemy had broken through our front-line system. A number of stragglers from the forward battalions of the 59th and 61st Brigades and artillerymen were streaming back. The most pressing problems confronting Colonel Cotton appeared to be to endeavour to save the field guns, north-east of La Vacquerie, and to take up a defensive position in touch with the 12th Division and the 61st Brigade.

It was, however, evident that if the Battalion took up a position in front of the guns it would be in a sharp salient and holding a line too long for the numbers available. A line of defence was therefore established on either side of the La Vacquerie—Masnières road north-east of the former place and between the Hindenburg Line and the Hindenburg Support Line. One platoon of "C" Company, under 2nd-Lieutenant J. Crawford, advanced and drove the enemy from the wireless station—some five hundred yards in front of the left of the Battalion line—enabling Lieut.-Colonel Burne, R.A., to destroy some secret papers and to dismantle the wireless apparatus.

This platoon, assisted by some forty artillerymen armed with rifles, then took up a line near the wireless station and with its right on the La

Vacquerie-Masnières road commanding the guns of the 92nd F.A. Brigade temporarily abandoned on the east of that road. Half of "B" Company was sent up to reinforce the platoon and, advancing with it, temporarily re-took the guns, thus enabling the artillerymen to remove twelve breech-blocks.* Heavy shelling and an attempted encircling movement of the enemy by the right flank compelled withdrawal eventually to the main defensive line. During the morning the enemy delivered four attacks on this line, south-east of the La Vacquerie valley, all of which were repulsed, although both flanks were in the air.

In the afternoon the situation was more quiet and touch was obtained with the 12th Division on the right. Rumours of the fall of La Vacquerie reached the Battalion, but no confirmation followed. About 6.0 p.m. Lieut.-Colonel Priaulx arrived, accompanied by Lieut.-Colonel A. C. Sheepshanks (of the Regiment but then commanding the 10th Bn. 60th), the former, as has been seen, taking command of the 59th Brigade troops in the line.

Throughout the day the guns of the 91st F.A. Brigade (Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Erskine), practically in the front line, were served with great gallantry; during the night they were withdrawn.

About 2.0 a.m. on December 1st, as already recorded, Captain Pegler, with the remains of the Tenth Battalion arrived, and, at 8.0 a.m., was posted astride the La Vacquerie-Masnières road just behind the front line.

At about this hour two attacks on the right centre ("A" Company—Captain R. C. Davison) were repulsed; during the afternoon a company of the 2nd/6th Bn. Sherwood Foresters, 6th Division, came up in support and was put in touch with the 7th Bn. K.O.Y.L.I. on the left.

On the 2nd the line was heavily shelled in the morning with enfilade fire from the right, "A" and "C" Companies bearing the brunt. Soon after 2.30 p.m. the enemy made a determined attack on the right under cover of heavy enfilade machine-gun fire and obtained a footing in "A" Company's front. Twice the trench was almost cleared, but eventually the supply of bombs ran out and the enemy reached the La Vacquerie-Masnières road. Two companies of the 11th Bn. D.L.I. were sent up to reinforce "A" Company and a line was established almost at right angles with the former line and facing south-east.

During the night of the 2nd/3rd the Battalion was relieved by the 2nd/7th Bn. Royal Warwickshire Regt., 61st Division, and moved back to dug-outs in the original support trench accompanied by Captain Pegler and his little party of the Tenth Battalion. In addition to this party the Eleventh Battalion had attached to it during the fighting: two sections

* For his gallantry on this occasion, 2nd-Lieutenant Crawford was awarded the D.S.O.

R.E. under 2nd-Lieutenant Hill; twenty-five O.R.s, 10th Bn. 60th, under 2nd-Lieutenant Wade; thirty-one O.R.s, 11th Bn. 60th, under 2nd-Lieutenant Hopkins; two companies 11th Bn. D.L.I.; one company 2nd/6th Bn. Sherwood Foresters; and a few details of the 13th Division.

About 8.30 a.m. on the 3rd the S.O.S. came through and both battalions "stood-to," the Eleventh Battalion manning the old British front line. Throughout the day the enemy shelled the position heavily with H.E. and gas, whilst no authentic news could be obtained as to what was happening in front.

At 6.30 p.m. both Battalions were finally relieved and moved back, the Tenth Battalion to its transport lines at Fins, the Eleventh to Sorel.

The Twelfth
Battalion.
Gonnelleu.
November 30th-
December 3rd,
1917.

At 6.30 a.m., November 30th, the enemy put down a heavy barrage east of Fifteen Ravine, near which the Twelfth Battalion had gone into camp the night before, and at 7.30 a.m. low-flying enemy aeroplanes appeared; the barrage stopped for a few minutes and then came down again more heavily. The Battalion "got dressed" and ammunition and Lewis-guns were issued. At 8.30 a.m., as a precautionary measure, the Battalion was moved under cover of the railway embankment and into a near-by trench, and at this time upwards of thirty enemy machines were flying at about three hundred feet beyond Gonnelleu and repeatedly diving down as if firing into our trenches.

At 9.10 a.m. a number of stragglers arrived from units of the 12th Division and elsewhere, but nothing definite could be got out of them except that Germans were approaching Gonnelleu when they left.

At 9.20 a.m. a message, timed 9.10 a.m., was received from Brigade H.Q. to the effect that the brigade was at once to occupy the high ground from La Vacquerie to Quentin Mill. From left to right: the 12th Bn. 60th at La Vacquerie, the Twelfth Battalion with its left on Gonnelleu, then the 6th Bn. K.S.L.I. and, on the right, the 6th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire L.I.

About the same time Colonel Riley met the G.S.O. II, 20th Division, who informed him that he was to take command of the brigade and to send two battalions to the Hindenburg Line, one to La Vacquerie, and one to Gonnelleu. Colonel Riley does not appear to have assumed command as, at 9.30 a.m., Brigade H.Q. was issuing orders to him by which he was to advance on Gonnelleu with the Twelfth Battalion, whilst the 12th Bn. 60th moved on La Vacquerie and the remaining two battalions into the Hindenburg Line to the north; it will be observed that, for the two latter

battalions, this was a considerable variation on the orders issued at 9.10 a.m., upon which, as a fact, the Battalions acted.

Accordingly, at 9.35 a.m., the Battalion advanced on Gonnelieu with "D" Company leading, supported by "A" echeloned on the left flank, the right of "D" being directed on the north-west corner of the wood immediately west of Gonnelieu: its orders were to make good the line of the Cambrai road, north-east of Gonnelieu, by which, presumably, was meant the Gouzeaucourt-Bonavis road. "B" and "C" Companies were kept in reserve to fill gaps as the situation demanded.

Colonel Riley saw the O.C. 12th Bn. 60th, who was moving at the same time on La Vacquerie, and it was decided that it was useless to send more battalions to the Hindenburg Line until the ground between Gouzeaucourt and Gonnelieu was made good, a large number of the enemy being already on the outskirts of Gouzeaucourt.

In any case, at 9.55 a.m., the 6th Bn. K.S.L.I. was advancing towards Quentin Mill with its right directed on Gouzeaucourt and the 6th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire L.I. was on the railway between the K.S.L.I. and the Twelfth Battalion.

At 10.10 a.m. from Quentin Ridge, and from the wood upon which "D" Company's right was directed, there was considerable machine-gun fire which swept the head of Fifteen Ravine and the spurs running west from Fusilier Ridge on each side of the ravine. The two leading companies worked up the valley between these spurs without much loss and by 10.30 a.m. were deployed, facing south-south-east, between the Cambrai (or Bonavis) road and Gonnelieu. Both flanks were in the air except for a few of the Northamptonshire Regiment on the right and some of the 12th Bn. 60th, four hundred yards to the left rear of the left company. By 12 noon the 6th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire L.I. was moving forward on the right, so "B" Company of the Twelfth Battalion was sent up to connect between the left of "A" Company and the 12th Bn. 60th, in which it succeeded.

At 5.0 p.m. the Battalion was holding a line about one thousand yards long forming an obtuse salient with the centre some three hundred yards north of the east end of Gonnelieu cemetery and the flanks on the Bonavis road. From right to left were "D," "A" and "B" Companies with bombing posts pushed forward, whilst "C," in support, was dug in near the head of Fifteen Ravine.

At about 6.0 p.m. a patrol of one N.C.O. and eight men from "A" Company penetrated Gonnelieu and captured two German N.C.O.s almost in the centre of the village, but, there being many of the enemy in the village, had to fight its way back. Subsequent patrols found a party of at

least fifty Germans digging and wiring at that corner of the wood which had been the objective of "D" Company's right and others, with two machine-guns, occupying a strong point in the houses on the west side of the village.

Touch was obtained with the 6th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire L.I. on the right through the Northamptonshires and a party of the 12th Divisional R.E., which had been in Gonnelle, attached itself to "D" Company and did very useful work wiring the company front during the night—how useful will be seen presently.

Nine British 18-pdr. guns, two 6-inch howitzers and two 60-pdr. guns were found just north of the cemetery; application was made to Brigade H.Q. for a party to remove the 18-pdrs. and a covering-party was established, but, unfortunately, no one arrived until after 5.30 a.m., when it was too late.

At 8.0 p.m. Colonel Riley reported himself to Brigade H.Q.—he was evidently not in command of the brigade now—and it was arranged that one company of the 6th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire L.I. should endeavour to clear Gonnelle of the enemy while two platoons of "A" Company should cover its left flank as it advanced. At 1.0 a.m. on December 1st two trench-mortars fired one hundred and eight rounds in two minutes and the two platoons of "A" Company advanced south along the east side of the road running through the cemetery.

Unfortunately the company of the 6th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire L.I. did not arrive until fifteen minutes later and, when it advanced, was met by machine-gun fire, so the operation came to naught. The enemy took no notice of the trench-mortar fire.

Otherwise the night as a whole was very quiet and ration and water mules were taken forward without hindrance as far as the cross-roads behind the Battalion centre.

At 8.30 a.m. on the 1st the enemy shelled the northern exit of Gonnelle and, a few minutes later, about forty Germans approached one of "B" Company's forward bombing-posts; they were driven off with considerable loss, chiefly by Lewis-gun fire. Twenty minutes later a heavy H.E. and trench-mortar barrage came down all along the Battalion front line and the trenches were badly knocked about, whilst, at the same time, Fifteen Ravine was heavily bombarded.

Under cover of this a heavy attack was delivered along the front of the Battalion and of the right company of the 12th Bn. 60th. "A" Company sent a platoon to the assistance of "B," which was hard pressed, two Lewis-guns and their teams having been knocked out at the bombing-blocks.

At the same time the Guards Division, which had captured about half the village by an attack from the west at dawn, was heavily attacked and driven out, part of the troops re-forming on "D" Company. Incidentally Colonel Riley had been given no definite information regarding this attack by the Guards, as to the hour at which it would take place, nor from which direction. As a result of this enemy success a wedge was driven in between the left and centre companies, the left platoon of the latter having previously, as has been seen, been sent to help the left company's bombing-posts.

By now there was only one unwounded officer left in the three front companies. The acting C.S.M. of "B" Company organized a counter-attack with a handful of his own company and "A" Company and was last seen advancing against greatly superior numbers of the enemy near Gonnelieu cemetery. The remainder of "B" Company, about twenty men, fell back with the 12th Bn. 60th along Frimley Trench, whilst the relics of the right platoon of "A" Company were pushed back on to the Bonavis road, where they joined "D" Company. The situation is more easily understood when it is recollected that the original line was a salient with the outer flanks of the outer companies ("D" and "B") already on the Bonavis road.

Although severely wounded in the leg, Captain H. Williams, M.C., commanding "D" Company, held on on the right despite repeated German attacks; the latter had penetrated through the gap, formed by the forced withdrawal of "B" Company, and were about two hundred yards to the left rear, but all attempts to break through the wire on the company front were stopped; this wire, it will be recalled, had been put out during the night by the party of the 12th Divisional R.E. which had attached itself to Captain Williams. The left and centre platoons fired nearly all their ammunition and three Lewis-guns fired about twelve drums each at a range of under one hundred yards.

The company suffered heavily, only five unwounded men remaining in the left platoon, but eventually the enemy ceased his attacks. Had this company given way a gap of at least one thousand yards would have been formed. Captain Williams was able to get a message back to Battalion H.Q. reporting that he was almost out of ammunition, but that heavy losses had been inflicted on the enemy and that his line was intact; he had thrown back his left to form a defensive flank.*

Meanwhile the enemy made a determined attempt to push through the gap on the left of the Battalion, but this brought the support company ("C") and Battalion H.Q. into play; the advance was easily stopped by

* Captain Williams subsequently received a Bar to the Military Cross.

the fire of two machine-guns, four Lewis-guns and rifles, a large number of casualties being inflicted at about six hundred yards range, whilst the 12th Bn. 60th, on the left, took a hand by firing into the flank of the attack.

These events had occupied about an hour and a half, for, at 10.0 a.m., a battalion of the Grenadier Guards delivered a counter-attack from Flag Ravine to Fifteen Ravine directed on the line Gonnelieu Cemetery—Foster Lane. This attack was carried out with great steadiness under heavy machine-gun fire from the front and right flank, the enemy on the north of the Bonavis road retiring as soon as the Grenadiers came within two hundred yards.

This counter-attack reached the northern half of its objective but enfilade machine-gun fire caused the troops to fall back for one hundred and fifty yards, where they dug in. A number of "C" Company had joined in this attack and lost rather heavily.

At 3.0 p.m. on December 1st the situation was roughly as follows:—

The 12th Bn. 60th from La Vacquerie to Frimley Trench, the Guards, with a few of "C" Company, thence to the Bonavis road, "B" and "D" Companies, with a few of "A," thence to the original right of the line. From there the Guards, Northamptonshire Regiment, and 6th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire L.I. continued the line towards Quentin Mill. There was also one company of the Essex Regiment near Battalion H.Q., in Fifteen Ravine.

At about 3.30 p.m. a message was received that all troops of the 60th Brigade, west of Foster Lane, could withdraw at dusk as the Guards were to hold that part of the line and the Battalion was given an area into which to move in support.

As the Battalion held two hundred and fifty yards of front line it could not withdraw until properly relieved—an operation which was completed with difficulty by 2.30 a.m. on December 2nd. It was then fitted into trenches in the Frimley Trench area and in Farm Ravine, the area allotted to it in the above message having been in the hands of the enemy since 10.0 a.m. on the 1st. Battalion H.Q. was with the 183rd Brigade (H.Q. and troops) in Farm Ravine.

At dawn on December 2nd, companies were readjusted and posts established to cover a valley running west from Fusilier Ridge; also all men were moved from Farm Ravine and put into Frimley Trench.

This was just as well for, soon afterwards, Farm Ravine was heavily shelled, several of the shelters just vacated being blown in; the 183rd Brigade in the ravine was lucky to escape with few casualties as the troops were somewhat crowded and there were low-flying aircraft about.

The day was bitterly cold and there was no shelter of any sort, but orders were received that the brigade would move back to Sorel that night.

During the late afternoon and evening there were several S.O.S. signal messages and, at 10.0 p.m., orders were received for one officer and fifty other ranks to proceed to the support of the 8th Bn. Worcestershire Regt. at Corner Work, just north-west of La Vacquerie : from here a patrol went out to find a few Germans with one machine-gun about six hundred yards east of La Vacquerie. The party returned at 1.0 a.m., December 3rd, and, at 3.30 a.m., orders were received to move. The Battalion moved out by companies and, the shelling having suddenly slackened, there were no casualties, Sorel being reached at about 8.0 a.m., by which time most of the men were completely exhausted.

The Transport officer had got most of the blankets, packs and officers' kits from Fifteen Ravine Camp and also the cooker from Farm Ravine, but "C" Company's packs in the latter place had been annihilated and many of the packs in the camp had been either destroyed—or looted !

The Details, under Major Breckon, had been rushed up to hold the Brown Line on November 30th and had had two men killed by shell-fire.

Thus by December 4th, all three Battalions were out of the line and, for them, the operations on the Cambrai front were past. The fighting was not yet over but the 20th Division had borne at least its share, both in attack and defence, and now, with a clear conscience, could leave the field to others. The story of the rest of the fighting, as also comment on the operations as a whole, find no appropriate place in this record, which closes with the tale of the casualties incurred.

The Tenth Battalion lost Captain and Adjutant T. H. Henderson, M.C., 2nd-Lieutenant C. S. Eidmans, and seven other ranks killed ; Captain T. G. L. Ashwell and seventy-eight other ranks wounded : Lieut.-Colonel L. H. W. Troughton, M.C., Captain M. A. Young, 2nd-Lieutenant W. H. Rodger, Captain C. S. Wills (R.A.M.C.) and one hundred and sixty-one other ranks missing, also 2nd-Lieutenants R. Edwards, D. G. Thomas and nine other ranks missing, believed wounded.

"In this action," the Diary states, "the Battalion sustained an irretrievable loss in Lieut.-Colonel L. H. W. Troughton, M.C. ; he was the only officer doing duty with the Battalion who had been with it since embarkation."

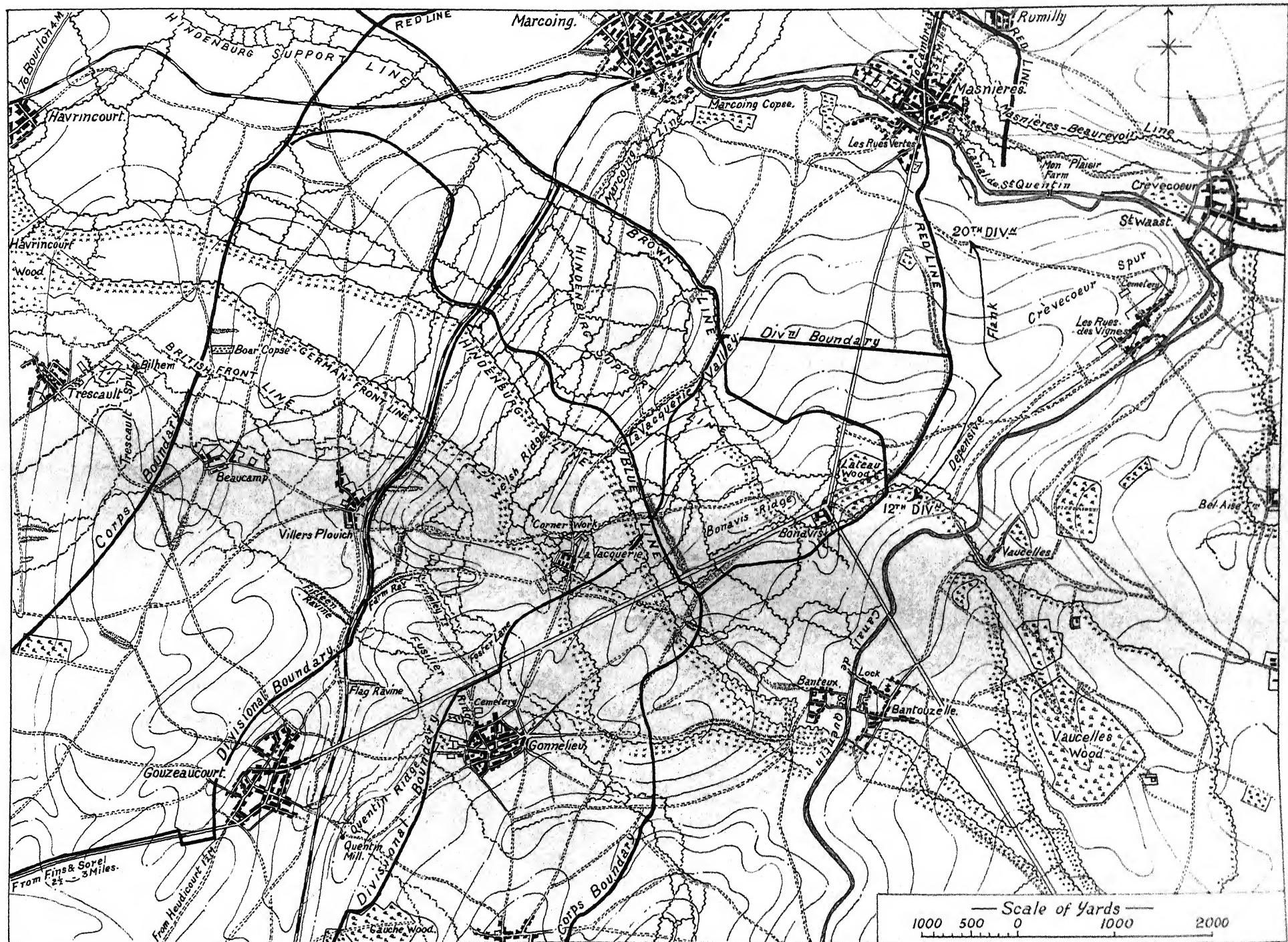
In the Eleventh Battalion Lieutenant G. Spencer died of wounds and 14 other ranks were killed ; 2nd-Lieutenants A. W. Edwards, J. R. Napier, E. H. Weston, M.C., F. W. Holdway, F. J. Plant, W. R. Hudson (the latter

at duty), and eighty-eight other ranks were wounded and thirty other ranks were missing.

Of the Twelfth Battalion thirteen other ranks were killed, Captain H. Williams, M.C., and 2nd-Lieutenants W. C. H. Sanders, J. Middlebrook, R. H. Walpole and eighty-four other ranks wounded, whilst thirty-two other ranks were missing.

OPERATIONS ON THE CAMBRAI FRONT.

1917.



THE TENTH, ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH BATTALIONS.

20th November-3rd December, 1917.

CHAPTER VII

THE CLOSE OF 1917.

THE major operations of 1917 are over and the story of the part taken in them by the Rifle Brigade has been told ; there remain to be recorded, in such detail as space permits, the common round of the several Battalions and their movements subsequent to their last appearance in a formal battle and up to the close of the year.

The Third Battalion.

The Third Battalion has not been heard of since August 31st, when it was in the trenches of the Zillebeke area. For the first fortnight in September it was variously employed, in the line, in brigade reserve in camp at Dickebusch, and on working-parties under the R.E. or in various parts of the brigade front. On September 15th the Battalion was relieved and moved to camp at Hallebast Corner and, next day, went by 'bus to billets in Moolenacker, near Meteren.

At this time Captain G. F. Fawn, R.A.M.C., left after a long innings of sixteen months as M.O. to the Battalion, his place being taken by Captain I. Vandandaigue, Canadian A.M.C., who, in turn, was succeeded five days later by 1st-Lieutenant W. A. Kellogg of the M.O.R.C., U.S.A.*

The Battalion was now to say farewell to Ypres and to start on a long journey south. On September 20th it moved by rail from Bailleul to Bapaume and thence next day a march of eleven miles took it to a camp near Ytres, where it remained until the 27th, on which day it marched eight miles to a camp in the Haut Allaines area (two miles north of Péronne). On the 29th a further move was made, this time luckily by 'bus, as the route covered three quadrants of a circle, via Tincourt, Roisel, Hervilly, and Berne to Hancourt, some three miles west-north-west of Vermand.

On September 30th the Battalion moved into the front line, relieving companies of 36th Jacob's Horse, 29th Lancers, and K.D.G.s of the 4th Dismounted Brigade of the Indian Cavalry Corps.

The line taken over was the A.I. sub-section (right) and ran from Pontru to about the Tumulus, north of that hamlet, with Battalion H.Q. in Cookers

* At this period a number of the Medical Officers' Reserve Corps, U.S. Army, were attached to the British Army.

Quarry some one thousand yards behind. The Battalion was now the right battalion of the British Army, having on its right the 224th Regiment of the 158th French Division. Our Allies had apparently overcome their former suspicion of the Indian Cavalry Corps ; two years earlier a suggestion that it should hold the line next to the French had been firmly negatived : —“*Non !*” had said General Foch. “*Pas les nègres !*” The Battalion was back in the IIIrd Corps, in which it had started the war, and was once more under Lieut.-General Sir William Pulteney, whose corps was in the Third Army.

The line consisted of posts in front with defended localities in rear, and, as the enemy trenches were about fifteen hundred yards distant, there was great patrolling activity.

Captain K. H. Hopkins, M.C., writes as follows :—

“ When the Battalion reached the Omignon area, it was confronted with new and at first perplexing problems. Not only was the whole system of holding the front area by widely separated posts in open, down-like, country in itself a novelty, but it was accompanied by another in a No-Man’s-Land from fifteen to seventeen hundred yards wide. This consisted of a deep valley, the bottom of which was entirely invisible from either front line, but which in its southern half could be visited in daylight from a Lewis-gun post which we occupied in the French lines.

“ As the posts were hundreds of yards apart, extensive patrolling was clearly necessary, and for that, for the moment the Battalion was ill-equipped. The heavy casualties in the Salient had by no means been made good, such reinforcements of officers and men as there were, were either entirely raw or new to the Battalion, and a new man until he has been tried and settled down to a battalion’s way is not much better than a raw man. We went into the line three hundred and sixty all told, to relieve a mixed cavalry brigade over a thousand sabres strong, and were so desperately short in numbers that on one occasion members of a newly arrived draft, some of whom had never been abroad before, had to go on patrol their first night in the line. As this patrol suffered casualties from a stray shell, at least one Rifleman was wounded in No-Man’s-Land without having ever been in a trench.

“ Naturally so large a No-Man’s-Land had features which, small in themselves, had great influence on the plans of any patrol. The outstanding one was a copse, which ran out, on a steep bank facing north, for eight hundred yards from our main post—from which, however, only the tops of the trees were visible—down to the bottom of the valley ; a cutting through it formed by a grass road afforded an admirable place for the enemy to lie up for a patrol and was in fact so used. In addition, there were other small

groups of trees, several cultivated terraces, and a crater blown on a cross-roads in the valley one or other of which had to be dealt with whenever a patrol went out, and if any extensive operation was on foot the whole lot would be made good and some of them held.

"At the start, until we knew the ground, we were content to deal with the large copse and the crater. The former had to be cleared nightly and a post in the middle held till dawn to prevent an attempt on our forward posts at that hour, a diversion favoured by the enemy and the large amount of dead ground he had to cover his retreat. The steep bank made the position of this party a trying one ; there was no cover and the season was winter, the enemy might ambush them on arrival as happened at least once, or approach them from above or below or even, less likely, through the undergrowth.

"Experience afforded the true solution ; it was found that by dealing with the copse as an incident in a larger operation the tables were turned on the enemy, a patrol in strength with the German lines as its objective by threatening the position of any party in the copse soon made it forbidden ground, and the initiative passed finally into our hands. Even then the problem of a close study of the enemy, or his wire, was no easy one, for, to enable a small patrol to get within striking distance, it was necessary to clear its path and secure its flanks. Patrols reached large numbers, a whole company, less only the company commander (though he too was sometimes included), C.S.-M., cooks and servants, was quite usual, sometimes reinforced by a platoon, or so, from a second company. Six officers, one hundred and twenty Riflemen and six Lewis-guns was normal ; expert gunners were allowed to divest the guns of their jackets. Large sweeping operations were customary and took hours night after night, or pickets leaving our line independently were placed at points on the flanks, while a mobile patrol with the main work to do passed through them. None of these flank parties was ever attacked in force, and it is by no means certain that they could have been supported in time had they been, but here the very fact that we had to take every man we could get, in a way, made for their safety. With such material and great distances to cross over ground much of it covered by long grass, quiet movement was only an ideal and often indeed it must have seemed to an enemy patrol that no small part of the British Army was in the valley.

"Partridges were disconcerting ; few things are more terrifying for the moment than a large covey rising from one's feet at 2 a.m., three-quarters of a mile in front of one's own lines.

"Just after the commencement of the First Battle of Cambrai, whole companies went out in full marching order to try and take advantage of

any signs of a German withdrawal, but nothing came of it except an encounter at the crater with a large German patrol, which turned up just at the wrong moment and escaped by precipitate flight. On one occasion we got to know that every German company had orders to send out patrols, consequently we sent none and waited for them. Two of their patrols met at the crater and fought a desperate and, we hoped, bloody battle. Retirements when the night's job was done were difficult and cumbersome because on all but the brightest of moonlight nights, each party had to be warned separately by messengers ; once or twice small points were not withdrawn and had to lie out all day, but got back in safety the next night. The most fearful often became the most headlong once his nose was turned homewards, but the size of the patrols prevented any hostile one lying in wait outside our wire.

"Owing to a peculiarity in the ground, every word spoken in the gun-pits of our 18 pdrs. could be distinctly heard in No-Man's-Land, a mile and a half away."

On October 7th the Battalion moved on relief to brigade support in Vadencourt, having "D" Company in Le Verguier Keep, to the southwest of that village, and two companies employed nightly on wiring the front line and advanced posts. On the 15th it moved up to the same sector of the line which, on the 18th, was re-organized.

Henceforth the brigade front would be organized in three self-contained defended localities, each with its own commander, staff, signal system and reserves. No. 1 Locality fell to the Third Battalion, very much on its original front, and Nos. 2 and 3 to the left battalion. On the 23rd the Battalion went into divisional reserve at Bernes, where training and work were carried out until the 31st, when it returned to the same sector of the line.

During the month the M.O., 1st-Lieutenant W. A. Kellogg, was replaced by Captain F. W. Rigby, R.A.M.C.

On the occasion of the visit to France of F.-M. H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught the Third Battalion was chosen to provide the guard-of-honour. A party, consisting of Captain H. Brierley, M.C., R.S.-M. W. Pelling, M.C., and twenty-six other ranks, proceeded on October 18th to Tramecourt, near Hesdin, where it provided the guard round the Chateau during the Duke's stay there until October 26th. The Colonel-in-Chief inspected the guard every morning and, at the end of his visit, expressed his pleasure with the turn-out of the guard.

On November 7th a party of the Battalion, strength six officers and ninety other ranks, attempted to raid the enemy lines to secure an identification. The enemy wire was found to be very thick and intact and after

a short fire-fight the party withdrew with one casualty, 2nd-Lieutenant E. C. Chancellor, the commander of the emprise, being slightly wounded.

After another tour in brigade support the Battalion returned to the line on the 16th and, on the 19th, carried out another operation. Elaborate arrangements were made for a party of six officers and one hundred other ranks, under 2nd-Lieutenant E. W. L. Fry, together with parties of the 12th Bn. Royal Fusiliers and 104th Field Company R.E., to explode six Bangalore torpedoes in the enemy wire and to establish four bomb-throwers. These were to be exploded by the R.E., when the parties would withdraw. As no report is forthcoming presumably all went according to plan and there were no casualties. On November 24th the Battalion went into divisional reserve at Bernes and began a programme of training and musketry, which included a Battalion Rifle Meeting; the latter had perforce to be curtailed owing to the German counter-attack of November 30th at Cambrai. The front of the 55th Division on the left was penetrated and the Battalion was ordered to take up position on the high ground, between Hervilly and Templeux, protecting the left of the 24th Division. There it lay out for two nights until relieved, on December 2nd, by dismounted Household Cavalry, when it moved to Montigny.

In the Rifle Meeting the list of Prize-winners includes:—

Snap Shooting—200 Yards.

Class "A"	C.S.-M. Sandy, A.	1
	R.S.-M. Pelling, W.	2
	A/Cpl. Reynolds, H.	3
	2nd-Lieut. E. W. L. Fry	3
Class "B"	Rfn. Mayson, A.	

300 Yards—5 Rounds, Slow : 15 Rounds, Rapid.

Class "A"	C.S.-M. Sandy.
Class "B"	Rfn. Hitchin, M.

400 Yards—Application.

Class "A"	Serjt. McKenzie, J.
Class "B"	Rfn. Vandermark, G.
	, Parrott, P.

Aggregate.

C.S.-M. Sandy	1
R.S.-M. Pelling	2
Rfn. Lucas	3
Serjt. McKenzie	4

On December 3rd, the Battalion went back into the line occupying much the same sector. Whilst there a patrol discovered pamphlets proclaiming the Russian Revolutionary Government placed in front of our wire by an enemy patrol. On the 7th one of the latter attempted to rush an advanced post but was driven off by rifle-fire, leaving rifles, caps and one dead German. For this, No. 5226 Corporal George, W., was granted the immediate award of the Military Medal.

On the 8th the Battalion was relieved by the 6th Dismounted Cavalry Battalion and went into billets in Montigny and Bernes, being now under the orders of the Cavalry Corps. On the 10th there was another move to Hancourt, where training was continued until the 19th, when "A" Company, under Captain Brierley, moved up to trenches north-east of Hargicourt in support to the 12th Bn. Royal Fusiliers. On the 21st the remainder of the Battalion moved to Templeux Quarries in divisional support.

On the 23rd there was another move to the line east of Hargicourt, Battalion H.Q. being in that village.

Christmas Day was celebrated by the enemy exhibiting an illuminated board inscribed "A Merry Xmas"; the board was destroyed by Lewis-gun fire.

On the 27th, the Battalion went out into billets in Vendelles where on the 30th "Christmas Day" was kept. Dinners, under company arrangements, were at 1.0 p.m., "C" Company winning the prize for the best-decorated hut; the serjeants dined at 6.30 p.m., the Battalion String Band being in attendance as also at the officers' dinner at 8.0 p.m.

The last day of the Old Year found five Officers, twenty N.C.O.s, and two hundred and fifty men of the Third Battalion digging and wiring a switch line, just north of Jeancourt.

The 14th Division. At the end of August the 14th Division, in the Meteren area, was under orders for the line in the Neuve Eglise sector in relief of the 30th Division (VIIIth Corps, Second Army).

The 42nd Brigade was the first to move and the Ninth Battalion left Thieshouk on September 1st and next day was in brigade reserve at Bristol Castle, Messines, in the old British front line. Meanwhile the 41st Brigade on September 2nd moved into camps in the Ravelburg area, between Neuve Eglise and Bailleul, where it continued training and putting in some much-needed work on the camps which were new ones.

On the 6th the Ninth Battalion moved into the line in the right sector opposite Warneton with its right on the River Douve.

On the 10th the Ninth Battalion came back to huts east of Neuve Eglise,

whilst the Seventh Battalion moved into brigade reserve at Bristol Castle and the Eighth to the front line north-east of Messines.

The Ninth Battalion on the 16th moved to billets in the Douleieu area, where it was in support to the 57th Division whilst being relieved by the 38th in the Fleurbaix-Bois Grenier-Armentières area. On the 18th there was another move to camp at Kortepyp, where the usual training and work took place until the 27th, when the Battalion once more became brigade reserve in Bristol Castle, where it finished the month.

The Seventh and Eighth Battalions carried out the normal routine until the 20th, when the former carried out a raid "in order to assist operations elsewhere." These, as events were to show, were the third stage of the Third Battle of Ypres, when the Sixteenth Battalion was engaged almost on the extreme right of the attack, on the Ypres-Comines Canal, and some four miles north of the Seventh Battalion's raid.

The Seventh
Battalion Raid.
September 20th,
1917.

The raid was to be carried out on September 20th by "D" Company, strength about four officers and one hundred other ranks, commanded by Lieutenant C. A. M.

Van Millingen. The objective was an enemy trench, west of the Warneton-Les Quatre Rois Cabaret road, and some twelve hundred yards north-west of the former town; there were also some works to be attended to, but whether dug-outs or gun-pits was uncertain. Unfortunately the Battalion orders for the raid are not available but the 41st Brigade orders show that the wire was to be cut beforehand by heavy artillery and 18-pdrs., for which purpose the front-line garrison and raiding party would be withdrawn a little way back. The raid would take place under a barrage and its object was to capture and kill as many of the enemy as possible, to secure identifications, and to assist "the operations elsewhere" which, it will be recalled, covered a front of some eight miles.

At zero hour, 5.40 a.m., the company left its assembly trenches and advanced under cover of the barrage. It appears that the company was divided into three parties, of which Nos. 1 and 2 were destined for the enemy trench and No. 3 for the mysterious dug-outs.

When No. 1 entered the trench a party of seven Germans was seen running away and, in order to avoid a pursuit which would probably have gone too far, the O.C. No. 1 ordered them to be shot; this was done.

Apart from these men there were no more of the enemy in No. 1's trench. The Lewis-gun with this party fired four drums on enemy endeavouring to escape from No. 3's dug-outs and inflicted several casualties. On the return journey three men of No. 1 came across four of the enemy lying in a

shell-hole between the lines; as these showed fight they were killed, except one, who succeeded in getting away.

No. 2 entered the enemy trench without opposition and met seven of the enemy, of whom four were killed and three taken prisoners.

On leaving the trench for the dug-outs No. 3 came under heavy machine-gun fire from south of the River Lys and lost its officer. At the same time a few of the enemy, at the end of a sap, started bombing, with the result that this party was held up for a couple of minutes until the enemy had been disposed of; then proceeding to the dug-outs it bombed these and killed about six men who refused to come out. A party of four tried to escape but three were caught and one killed, and a German officer was shot whilst trying to pull out his revolver; that, and his field-glasses, were brought back.

Casualties on the German side were one officer and twenty-one other ranks killed, with six prisoners, in addition to the losses inflicted on fleeing enemy by Lewis-guns; of the raiders 2nd-Lieutenant R. Stott and two Riflemen were killed and 2nd-Lieutenant A. A. Halford and thirteen other ranks were wounded.

The dug-outs proved to be seven old gun-pits and shelters made of corrugated iron and covered over with sods; these were all bombed and damaged and one set on fire. Altogether a highly successful operation.

That night the Battalion was relieved and went into divisional reserve in camp near Neuve Eglise, where it remained till the end of the month.

On the 23rd General Skinner, Commanding 41st Brigade, addressed the Battalion, thanking it for its work in the raid and since the commencement of the Arras battle in April.

About the 25th the Battalion found itself trebling the parts:—

- (a) Divisional Reserve to the 14th Division.
- (b) " " " 38th "
- (c) Part of the garrison of the Armentières defences.

Casualties during the last tour in the line, apart from those of the raid, were 2nd-Lieutenant G. Cochrane and ten other ranks killed; 2nd-Lieutenants L. G. Berrett, M.C., W. E. Watkinson and twenty-three other ranks wounded.

During September the Seventh Battalion was awarded six M.C.s; one D.C.M.; twenty-seven M.M.s.

The Eighth Battalion, apart from aerial bombing of its camp at night, finished the month uneventfully, except for a sad occurrence on the 23rd when Captain and Adjutant A. R. Backus, M.C., died as the result of a

bicycle accident. Other casualties during the month were five other ranks killed and eighteen wounded.

On the 26th, Major A. C. Sheepshanks, D.S.O., left to take command of the 10th Bn. 60th and Major G. V. Carey assumed command in the absence of Lieut.-Colonel D. E. Prideaux-Brune, in England on one month's leave.

During the month 2nd-Lieutenant W. N. Sproston was awarded the Military Cross and No. 8005 A/R.S.-M. H. Harwood a Bar to the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

On October 2nd the Ninth Battalion moved into the line in the Warneton right sector until the 8th, when it was relieved by the Cameronians of the 19th Brigade; the 33rd Division relieving the 14th. On the 10th and 11th it moved by route march and 'bus to Ridge Wood and on the 14th moved to camp at Bedford House, the camps at both places being remarkably bad. On the 17th the 42nd Brigade relieved the 41st in the line and the Ninth Battalion took over from the Eighth in brigade reserve in Sanctuary Wood. On the 24th it was relieved by a battalion of the 5th Division and next day moved by 'bus to Mont des Cats.

From October 1st to the 5th the Seventh Battalion did a little training and much working and on the 6th moved to Wood Camp, near Reninghelst, where it bivouacked in most uncomfortable conditions, there being no tents. On the 9th the Battalion moved to huts near Dickebusch, this being the first occasion on which the Band had marched at the head of the Battalion.

On the 10th it relieved troops of the 15th Brigade, 5th Division, which had made an unsuccessful attack on the previous day. This had been a "minor operation" in conjunction with the main attack of October 9th, the sixth phase of "Third Ypres," from Zonnebeke northwards. The sector taken over was on the left of the brigade front which extended from the Menin Road to the Reutelbeek. Enemy shelling, the intense darkness and the dreadful condition of the tracks combined to make it a bad relief, which was not complete until 2.0 a.m. About forty casualties were incurred, including Captain C. A. M. Van Millingen, M.C., who was wounded.

Practically no trenches existed and, during the tour, a continuous trench was dug connecting the few pill-boxes that were there. It was described as a very trying time for the men since no infantry action occurred and they had to sit under the continuous shelling, which became intense at times in answer to our practice barrages.

On the 16th, the Seventh Battalion was relieved by the 9th Bn. 60th and went back to Ridge Wood Camp, where it rested and cleaned up until the 21st. On that day it marched to huts in Murrumbidgee Camp and on the 23rd to billets in Meteren village.

The experiences of the Eighth Battalion had been very similar.

On the 10th, it had moved up to become brigade reserve at Stirling Castle, which it eventually reached after "possibly the worst relief ever experienced by the Battalion."

As already related, it was relieved on the 16th by the Ninth Battalion and, after four days in camp at Bedford House, moved on the 20th to Ridge Wood, next day to Reninghelst, and on the 23rd to poor and scattered billets north of Meteren.

All accounts agree that this month had been one of the worst ever endured by the three Battalions since they landed in France.

Casualties had been, in the Seventh Battalion, two officers wounded—one being 2nd-Lieutenant S. H. Burch—thirty-two other ranks killed, seventy-four wounded and eleven missing.

The Eighth Battalion lost 2nd-Lieutenants C. E. Hadwen wounded and three officers gassed, eleven other ranks killed, seventy-eight wounded and one missing. Of the Ninth Battalion four other ranks were killed; 2nd-Lieutenant V. Jones and thirty-three other ranks were wounded, whilst five officers, including the Padre, and fourteen other ranks were gassed.

For the 41st Brigade, November was a peaceful if strenuous month.

Until the 11th, the Seventh and Eighth Battalions remained training at Meteren and on the 11th moved by road and rail to St. Martin-au-Laert and Tatinghem, just west of St. Omer. Intensive training was continued and there were various sporting events. There was a cross-country run in which each company in the brigade had to enter one hundred men; the result was a quadruple tie, as one company in each battalion produced the necessary one hundred men at the finish. Otherwise there is little to record except that Lieut.-Colonel Prideaux-Brune and other officers of the Eighth Battalion spent an improving day, inspecting the Ordnance Workshops and the Bakery—in Calais!

The 42nd Brigade battalions spent an equally strenuous month, being detached for work under the Canadian Corps. On the 6th the Ninth Battalion left Mont des Cats and moved by bus from Flêtre to a camp on the Potijze-St. Jean road, where it remained until the 29th working on roads and light railways. On that date it moved, by march and rail via Ypres and Godewaersvelde, to billets in the Steenvoorde area.

On November 30th the Seventh and Eighth Battalions entrained at Wizernes for Brandhoek and went, the former into hutments in a camp near Vlamertinghe, the latter to Ridge Camp, near Brandhoek.

On December 2nd, the 41st Brigade relieved the 25th Brigade, of the 8th Division, in the line north and north-west of Passchendaele. It will



THE MUD OF THE PASSCHENDAELE SALIENT.

2nd December, 1917.

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be recalled that the Second Battalion had, on this day, been engaged in the attack on Venison Trench.

The Seventh and Eighth Battalions during the day both moved by rail from Brandhoek to the Wielte-St. Jean area, where they spent the day. That evening the Eighth Battalion moved up and relieved the Second Battalion in the line, losing in the process 2nd-Lieutenant J. Hogg, killed; Lieutenant T. A. Baldock ("A" Company's commander) mortally wounded, and some twenty-five other ranks. 2nd-Lieutenant J. D. Davidson assumed command of "A" Company and completed a very difficult company relief. Meanwhile the Seventh Battalion went into support at Capricorn Camp, near Spree Farm; owing to the anxious position in the line, however, "A" and "B" Companies were sent up in close support to Meetcheele, whence they returned the next night. On the 5th the Seventh Battalion moved into the line and the Eighth came out, two companies to immediate support, the remainder to Capricorn Camp.

On the evening of the 8th the 41st Brigade was relieved by the 42nd, the Seventh Battalion going back to its former camp near Vlamertinghe; the Eighth to one near Brandhoek. During the tour, enemy shelling had been almost continuous on front, or back, areas and upon roads and tracks, the weather had been very severe although mostly dry before the day of relief. In the circumstances casualties, although sufficiently serious, may be accounted light and the number of cases of trench-feet was negligible.

A grave loss was, however, sustained in the death from wounds of Lieut.-Colonel J. Maxwell, D.S.O., M.C., Commanding the 8th Bn. 60th, and formerly of the Seventh Battalion.

The Ninth Battalion had moved on December 3rd to camp near Vlamer-tinghe and was employed on working-parties until the 8th, when it moved by rail from Brandhoek to St. Jean, where it remained in camp, finding more working-parties, until the 12th, when it relieved a battalion of the 43rd Brigade in the Passchendaele sector. Between then and the 22nd the Battalion did two tours in the line with a spell of work in camps behind from the 15th to the 19th. Whilst coming out on the 22nd, on relief by the Seventh Battalion, the Ninth Battalion suffered an irreparable loss in the death of its Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Colonel F. A. U. Pickering, D.S.O., Royal Scots Greys, and Adjutant, Captain J. M. Buckley, who were killed near the dressing station at Waterloo Farm, north-east of Graven-stafel, 2nd-Lieutenant J. P. Worton and the M.O., Captain T. M. Crawford, R.A.M.C., being wounded at the same time.

Frank Alexander Umfreville Pickering was born on August 2nd, 1881. At Eton he was in Radcliffe's house and was Keeper of the Field and of

Fives. He was gazetted to the Royal Scots Greys on January 5th, 1901, and served in South Africa 1901-02, earning four clasps to the Queen's Medal. On posting to the command of the Ninth Battalion on October 22nd, 1916, as a captain in The Greys, he became temporary lieutenant-colonel in the Rifle Brigade and, as such, was twice mentioned in despatches and awarded the D.S.O.

A brother-officer in The Greys writes that he was an extremely good companion and entertaining, played the piano and sang, and was an interpreter in French and German; he had a wonderful eye for all games and was an exceptionally good shot with a shot-gun.

Upon one occasion, when a friend was asked to a big shoot in France, Pickering went as his loader in order to see the sport and lived with the servants in the chateau.

He was most popular in the Ninth Battalion and was a tower of strength in its Rugby XV, for which he played full back, although never having played Rugby before.

Major Hon. N. G. Bligh, Ninth Battalion, assumed command of the Battalion, which went back to camp near St. Jean.

From December 8th, the Seventh Battalion found many working-parties and carried out such minor training as was possible until the 19th, when it marched to Hasler Camp, the 41st Brigade being now in support to the 42nd in the line. On the 22nd it relieved the Ninth Battalion in the line, as has been noted, and remained there until the 26th. Although casualties were not heavy, conditions were difficult owing to snow on the ground and a nearly full moon. On the night of final relief the incoming battalion was observed by the enemy, who put down a heavy barrage but, thanks to the initiative and coolness of the Battalion guides, casualties were comparatively few. On relief the Seventh Battalion went back to Wielte.

The Eighth Battalion did no further tour in the front line here, remaining in its camp until the 19th, when it moved to the St. Jean area, and thence, on the 22nd, to support at Bellevue (one and a half miles west of Passchendaele). Here it was chiefly employed in carrying up rations to the front line, a service for which it earned the thanks of the recipients, until the 26th, when it came out of the line and went into camp near St. Jean.

The 14th Division was now out of the line.

Casualties during the month, in addition to those already recorded, were, in the Seventh Battalion, nine other ranks killed; Captain F. E. Spurling, 2nd-Lieutenants A. B. Love, G. N. Reavell, H. W. L. Tottenham, G. L. Thomson and fifty-six other ranks wounded, with four missing; in the Eighth Battalion eighteen other ranks were killed; 2nd-Lieutenant

F. W. Hume and fifty-nine other ranks wounded and three missing ; in the Ninth Battalion five other ranks were killed and Captain F. J. Traylen, 2nd-Lieutenants I. Macpherson, P. F. Bayley and thirteen other ranks were wounded.

The last few days of 1917 found the three Battalions in billets at Setques, Esquerdes and St. Martin-au-Laert, where cleaning up took place followed by Christmas festivities ; weather conditions prevented any training or outdoor recreation apart from tobogganing, and a thaw soon put a stop even to that.

On December 31st information was received that the 14th Division was being transferred from the Fourth to the Fifth Army and would shortly be moving south.

On this last day of the Old Year "A" and "D" Companies of the Eighth Battalion had their Christmas Dinners. On the proposal of Colonel Prideaux-Brune, officers, non-commissioned officers and men passed resolutions to be forwarded to Mrs. R. C. Maclachlan : of sympathy with her on the loss of her husband, who commanded the Battalion for so long, and of thanks to her for all she had done, and was doing, for the comfort of the Battalion.

The Thirteenth Battalion. After the action of October 4th the Thirteenth Battalion had but a short rest at Willibeke Camp and returned on October 7th to the support line in the Mount Sorrell sector, remaining there until the 11th, when it went back to camp at Dead Dog Farm until the 15th, when there was another move to Locrehof Farm, between Locre and Dranoutre. There training was resumed until the 22nd, when the Battalion moved by 'bus to St. Jean for work on the roads in the forward area until the 29th, when it was moved back to billets in the Strazeele area, where training was continued. Battalion sports were held here, the most important event being the cross-country race in which Serjeant Gregg, D.C.M., M.M., was the winner out of over four hundred officers and men competitors, most of whom finished within the allotted time. The prize, a barrel of beer, was won by "A" Company.

On the 18th Brig.-General S. G. Francis, D.S.O., relieved Brig.-General C. W. Compton, C.M.G., in command of the 111th Brigade ; the latter proceeding home on six months' leave, after commanding the brigade since November 1916.

During the month the following Honours and Awards were notified : Bar to M.C., one ; M.C., one ; Bar to D.C.M., one ; D.C.M., three ; M.M., six.

On November 8th the Battalion moved to hutments at Kemmel Shelters,

east of Loker, where further training was continued with noticeably good results, the health of all ranks being excellent. On the 17th the Battalion took over the front line north-east of Klein Zillebeke. The relief was accomplished satisfactorily and dispositions were two companies in the front shell-hole line, one in support and one in reserve, companies changing round every four days. Observation was good and sniping brisk, a bag of eight being obtained.

On the 25th the Battalion went back into hutments in Ridge Wood, where numerous working-parties were found.

Casualties during November had been two officers and forty-nine other ranks.

Of December there is little to record. From Ridge Wood the whole Battalion was continuously employed on work in the front and reserve areas and no better description of the life can be found than that in "For the Duration."* On December 5th a move was made to Curragh Camp, near Loker, where routine was normal until the 13th, when the Battalion returned to the front line, north-east of Klein Zillebeke. The tour was uneventful and a return was made to Ridge Wood on the 21st. Another week of working-parties followed until the end of the year, when the Thirteenth Battalion found itself back at Curragh Camp. Notwithstanding a tour in the line and the working-parties, casualties had been slight, consisting of one officer and thirty-five other ranks.

Active preparations were in progress for Christmas Dinners and an entertainment to be held in the Cinema Hall, Loker, on January 1st.

**The First
Battalion.**

From October 10th to the 22nd the First Battalion remained in its billets in Warlus and then moved up to its old quarters of the summer, the Brown Line behind Monchy. Next day it moved across the Arras-Cambrai road with Battalion H.Q. in a quarry at Feuchy Chapel cross-roads. Here it remained in brigade reserve until the 31st, when it went into the front line in the left sub-sector of the Monchy sector.

During the month the award of Military Medals was notified as follows : Bar to the M.M., one ; M.M., fifteen. One recipient, C.S.-M. Payne, had, unfortunately, been killed. In addition, Captain A. M. Craigmile was awarded the Military Cross and Corporal Berry the D.C.M.

The ensuing tour was, on the whole, uneventful, except for the activity of enemy trench-mortars, which scored one particularly unlucky hit on a detached post, killing four out of the five occupants.

On November 8th the Battalion was relieved and went to Schramm

* "For the Duration," pp. 110, 111. D. H. Rowlands.

Barracks in Arras, where the next sixteen days were spent. "Everybody was really comfortable and when, after being warned to relieve the Hampshires in the Bois des Bœufs Camp, this order was cancelled at the eleventh hour, and the leave-allotment was doubled, the last eight days seemed better than the first."

Company and battalion training were carried out, varied by some work on roads.

On the 19th, operation orders were issued in the case of an enemy withdrawal to the Drocourt-Quéant Line as a consequence of the Cambrai attack of November 20th ; as has been seen, there was no such withdrawal.

On the 24th the Battalion moved to the Monchy defences, where it was employed chiefly at work under R.E. supervision until the 28th, when it went into the front line on the right of the brigade front, some five hundred yards beyond Monchy and facing north-east. Here trench-mortars were exceptionally quiet and machine-guns below normal, but, upon each of the next two days, the enemy artillery was intermittently very active and, at the same time, accurate.

On the 29th our artillery retaliated with good results, but on the 30th orders were issued that no firing should take place in order to mystify the enemy preparatory to a gas bombardment on December 1st. This took place at 7.0 p.m., artillery and machine-guns co-operating, but the result was unknown. On the 2nd the Battalion went back to Wilderness Camp, where it was employed in work, chiefly the construction of concertina-wire and salving the Brown Line. On the 6th there was a return to the front line in the same sector as the last tour ; here conditions were normal until the 10th, when the Battalion marched back to Schramm Barracks. On the 9th there had been one mysterious incident, three men taking rations in the early morning to an isolated post disappearing completely.

Before coming out of the line an order came into force that all units would "stand-to" at 6.15 a.m. and not "stand down" until the order to do so percolated from Divisional H.Q. According to the Divisional Order "it was evident" that within the next few days the enemy would attempt to recapture the Hindenburg Line ; therefore the 4th Division would be in a state of readiness each morning.

As the reserve brigade was to be ready to move at half an hour's notice the effect of the order was that the First Battalion, in Schramm Barracks, paraded at 6.15 a.m. daily until dismissed at any time between 8.20 and 9.0 a.m. Upon this order no comment is made here, but it appears to have had its share of criticism at the time !

On December 18th the Battalion went into brigade support in the Cambrai road sector, occupying a support trench and strong points for

some fifteen hundred yards, south of Monchy. Here was more work under the R.E. until the 22nd, when the Battalion took over the front line, right sub-sector, which was now south of Monchy. On the 23rd the special "Stand-to" order was cancelled and, after a normal tour, the Battalion returned to the Brown Line, south of the Cambrai road, where accommodation was found to be very bad and much work to be done to improve it.

Little remains to be said about the rest of the month. On the 30th the Battalion was back in the front line—the right sub-sector—where the last day of 1917 was celebrated by salvos from enemy light trench-mortars on our front line, calling for retaliation from our 6-in. Newton mortars, leading, in turn, to counter-retaliation from hostile heavy mortars.

Casualties during the month were six other ranks killed, one officer and thirty-four other ranks wounded and three missing.

Christmas festivities were deferred until the return of the First Battalion to Arras.

The Sixteenth Battalion. For the first fortnight of October the Sixteenth Battalion remained at Dranoutre and Lurgon Camp, carrying out training.

As part of the IXth Corps the 39th Division had made great preparations in the way of pack-transport for a possible move forward to beyond the crater-area, but, after being at two hours' notice on the 3rd, extended to six hours on the 5th, it finally relaxed and returned to normal conditions.

On the 15th it marched to Willebeke Camp to divisional reserve and on the 19th to brigade reserve in the Tower Hamlets-Shrewsbury Forest sector, being accommodated in Canada and Hedge Street Tunnels, with one company detached for work under the 283rd Army Tramways Company, R.E.

On the 24th the Battalion returned on relief to Willebeke Camp, moving on the 28th to Bois Camp, near Voormezeele.

Although not having been in the front line during the month, the Battalion had been so unfortunate as to lose Captain E. Krolik killed and 2nd-Lieutenant R. B. Forbes and twenty-four other ranks wounded, with two missing.

During October the following Awards were made for gallantry and devotion to duty on September 20th to 21st, 1917 : Military Cross, four ; Bar to Military Medal, one ; Military Medal, twenty-two.

On November 3rd the Battalion, four hundred strong, dug a new communication trench in the forward area at a cost of but four men wounded, and on the 5th marched to Chippewa Camp, near Reninghelst. The reason for this movement west is obscure, for, on the 7th, a return east is made by 'bus, landing the Battalion eventually in the Tower Hamlets sector as right front battalion. On the 10th a fighting patrol of one officer and



SERJEANT W. F. BURMAN, V.C.

twenty other ranks went out at 8.30 p.m. to capture and hold Lewis Houses ; these were pill-boxes in the enemy's line and were in dead ground. Gas had been projected previously at 7.0 p.m., but on arriving within thirty yards of the objective heavy machine-gun fire showed that the "houses" were still strongly held and that the gas had had little, or no, effect. The state of the ground made movement very slow, the men were up to their thighs in mud, so the patrol withdrew with a loss of one man wounded. That night the Battalion was relieved and went into support at Bodmin Copse, moving back on the 12th to divisional reserve in Ridge Wood.

On November 16th the Battalion was in front line in the left sub-sector of the Polderhoek sector, north of Gheluvelt, and remained there for forty-eight hours. On the 18th another fighting patrol went out, one officer and fifteen other ranks strong, to capture a mound opposite the centre company's front. The mound was manned by three machine-guns, but, after the officer had been thrice wounded, the men of the patrol dug in some forty yards in front of the original line with a communication trench back thither ; this secured a pill-box in No-Man's Land which the enemy had coveted. One man was wounded besides the officer—2nd-Lieutenant R. E. Wootton.

The same night the Battalion went out to brigade reserve at Torr Top Tunnels and next day returned to Chippewa Camp.

On the 24th and 25th the Battalion moved to billets near Watou and thence to Liverpool Camp (just north-west of Ypres) for work under the Chief Engineer, VIIIth Corps, on the construction of light-railways in the forward area.

Casualties during the month, in addition to those mentioned, were 2nd-Lieutenant V. F. Allen and nine other ranks killed, twenty-five other ranks wounded and one missing.

Extract from the London Gazette, November 26, 1917.

" His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to award the Victoria Cross to No. P.649 Serjeant Burman, W. F."

This award was for gallantry on September 20th, 1917.

On November 25th Lieut.-Colonel Hon. E. Coke, D.S.O., M.C., was evacuated (sick) and Major W. J. King, M.C., assumed command.

The greater part of December for the Sixteenth Battalion was to be a peaceful time. On the 7th, train from Ypres to Abeele took it to billets in the Steenvoorde-Watou area and, on the 9th, from Abeele to Lottinghem, whence billets at Selles were reached by march route.

After the usual training the Battalion left Selles on the 28th by road for Bayenghem and next day moved to Wizernes, whence it was railed to St. Jean for a camp at Irish Farm.

On the 30th the Sixteenth Battalion moved into the front line in the Poelcapelle sector and, on the last day of the year, suffered its only casualty of the month—one other rank wounded.

**The Second
Battalion.**

On arrival at Acquin on December 3rd Captain C. W. H. Bailie took over command of the Second Battalion, which settled down at once to training, being now re-organized in eight double-platoons. On the 8th, Major J. J. B. Cole, M.C., took over command.

There were divisional and brigade cross-country runs in which the Battalion was sixth and first respectively. Christmas Day was celebrated on December 23rd and the Finals of the Divisional Boxing Competition were held, Corporal Brooks winning the Light Weight and C.Q.M.-S. Bingham the Heavy.

The Battalion's stay at Acquin came to an end on December 26th, when it was railed from Wizernes to St. Jean, whence it marched to Junction Camp. On the 28th three companies worked under the R.E. and the camp was shelled during the morning and afternoon, one man being wounded. On December 30th the Battalion went into support at Bellevue, between Gravenstafel and Passchendaele, and spent the last night of the year finding carrying-parties to the front line. The day was "quiet" except for two other ranks who were, unfortunately, wounded.

During the month the following awards were made for gallantry near Passchendaele between November 17th and December 3rd: Bar to M.C., two; M.C., two; D.C.M. and M.M., one; Bar to M.M., one; M.M., eleven.

The 20th Division.

After coming out of the line on December 4th after the Cambrai operations, the Tenth Battalion, at its transport lines at Fins, was commanded, temporarily, by Captain J. E. Trevor-Jones, with Captain S. J. Pegler, D.S.O., as adjutant.

On that day it embussed for Ytres railway station, whence, after a delay of over four hours, it was railed to Buire, where it arrived at midnight after an extremely cold journey. The next day Major M. Morgan-Owen arrived to command the Battalion, Captain Pegler becoming second-in-command and Captain Trevor Jones adjutant.

On the 6th there was another move by road and rail, via Albert and Beaurainville, to Humbert, near Hesdin, where until the 11th training and re-equipping were carried out in bad billets and worse weather.

On December 11th the Battalion 'bussed to Belle Croix in the Blaringhem area and thence marched to La Sablonnière, where the billets were good. Here training was resumed and much-needed re-organization of the Battalion, which had suffered severely in N.C.O.s and specialists; actually,

in addition to two company serjeants-major, the losses in non-commissioned officers during the past month had amounted to no fewer than sixty-three, of whom thirty-two were full ranks.

Christmas festivities began at 2.30 a.m. on Christmas Eve, at which hour a fire broke out in a barn adjoining the H.Q. Mess and not until 7.0 a.m. was the safety of the main building assured. This was the first fire in billets since the arrival of the Battalion in France.

On Christmas Day special efforts were made to provide the men with good dinners ; these, organized by companies, were very successful. During the morning, in a strenuous game of "soccer," on a very muddy ground, the officers fought the serjeants to a draw, at one goal all.

On the 27th, after a trying six miles march on frozen snow to Ebblingham, the Battalion railed to Dickebusch and thence marched to Micmac Camp ; here, constructing a new Corps Reserve Line, it saw the Old Year out.

Honours and awards during the month included : Bar to M.C., one ; M.C., one ; D.C.M., one ; M.M., ten.

Although the weather during the first part of the month was very changeable, and during the latter part very cold and frosty, the health of the Battalion was exceptionally good, only seventeen other ranks being evacuated.

The ration strength at the end of the month was twenty officers and five hundred and forty other ranks.

The movements of the Eleventh Battalion were very similar to those of the Tenth and, by December 6th, it was at Wambercourt, after spending two nights at Ribemont. The necessary training and re-fitting took place and, on the 11th, it embussed for Wardrecques.

No incident of note is recorded except that Christmas Day was celebrated on December 25th, and on the 27th the Battalion accompanied the Tenth Battalion to Dickebusch, being billeted in the Burgomaster's Farm.

Here the New Year found the Eleventh Battalion also engaged on the same congenial occupation—the construction of the new Corps Line.

Honours and awards during December were : M.C., three ; D.C.M., one ; M.M., ten.

The Twelfth Battalion, leaving Sorel on December 4th, moved by 'bus to Hedauville, where it spent two days in comfortable billets.

On the 6th it arrived at Offin, having been railed from Albert to Beau-rainville, and marched next day to Bourthes, where training was carried

out until the 13th, when there was another march of five miles to Bléquin. There a special course of musketry was carried out with satisfactory results until the 18th, when there was another move by 'bus to Ebbinghem, followed by a short march to Lynde ; the transport had a hard day's march, arriving at 6.0 p.m. after twelve hours on the road. Company training was continued until Christmas Day, when the officers provided dinners for the men at mid-day and for the serjeants in the evening ; on Boxing Day the latter gave a smoking concert to which the officers were invited. The remainder of the year was occupied in training in sharp and frosty weather. An inter-company football competition was held on December 31st and was won by "C" Company, all matches being played in deep snow.

Major J. P. Breckon was in temporary command of the Battalion, Colonel Riley having gone home on one month's leave.

The 20th Division was now in the IXth Corps of the Fourth Army.*

The End of another Year. The events of 1917 had caused many moves for the Battalions of the Regiment and their distribution at the close of the year was far other from that at its beginning. Following the same grouping of Battalions as south, centre, and north, it will be seen that one Battalion only, the Sixteenth, was now in the same group as in January.

It may, therefore, be convenient to recall now the different situations of the several Battalions.

In the south there was now but the Third Battalion, in billets at Vendelles, but it was to be joined in a day or two by the Battalions of the 14th Division. In the centre was the First Battalion in the line in front of Arras. The remainder were all in the north ; the Second Battalion was at Passchendaele ; the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth at rest in the St. Omer area (but under orders for the Fifth Army in the south) ; the Tenth and Eleventh at work about Dickebusch, with the Twelfth training at Lynde. The Thirteenth Battalion was also at work, near Locre, whilst the location of the Sixteenth Battalion, faithful to the end, in the line at Poelcapelle, can still be described as "north-east of Ypres."

* On General Sir Herbert Plumer's departure to command the British troops in Italy the Second Army had temporarily become the Fourth under General Sir Henry Rawlinson.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1918.

THE situation on January 1st, 1918, may best be described by quoting Sir Douglas Haig's own words in the first paragraph of his Despatch.*

"The broad facts of the change which took place in the general war situation at the close of 1917, and the causes which led to it, have long been well known, and need be referred to but shortly."

The Commander-in-Chief proceeds to review these facts, which include the general situation, the adoption of a defensive policy, the extension of the British front, man-power and the reduction in the number of infantry battalions, and preparations for defence. This record of the Battalions of the Rifle Brigade is no place for discussion, still less for criticism, of these points; they will be referred to, as and when they arise, during the course of the narrative but details must be sought in the above-mentioned Despatch and in the Official History.†

It is proposed, therefore, to continue the story of the several Battalions up to March 21st, the date of the great German attack, to meet which a defensive policy had been adopted by the High Command.

The First Battalion. The First Battalion remained in its trenches on and to the south of Greenland Hill until January 3rd, when it went back to Schramm Barracks after being sixteen days in open trenches.

On January 6th Christmas Day was celebrated, the whole Battalion, except the Transport, being accommodated in one large room at the top of the barracks. Companies were partitioned off and "B" Company and the Transport, in its own lines, had Christmas trees and presents. The Divisional "Follies" (now in the fourth year of their "run") gave a special performance in the theatre and the string band of the Household Battalion played during dinner and also at the officers' dinner later in the evening, when twenty-nine officers were present.

Altogether it was a very cheerful day and night, but before daylight

* Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch dated July 20th, 1918.

† "Military Operations. France and Belgium, 1918."

next morning anti-climax followed remorselessly when the Battalion found itself on parade and bound for Bois des Bœufs Camp.

There it worked on the Intermediate Line, experiencing one mishap when one company, through starting too early, was seen and shelled by the enemy, losing four killed and six wounded. On the 11th there was a move to the Monchy defences, north of the village, where more work was found. During the tour, which was quiet, a defence scheme was worked out embodying alternative plans for counter-attack in the event of a serious enemy attack gaining an initial success. On the 15th the Battalion moved into the front line, east of Monchy, where it spent four days in most uncomfortable conditions ; thaw and rain had their usual effect on trenches and communications, with the result that no hot food was obtainable and the water-tanks went out of order. On the 19th the Battalion moved back to the Brown Line, north of the Arras-Cambrai road near Feuchy Chapel, and on the 23rd returned to the same trenches in the front line. There was rather more machine-gun and trench-mortar fire than during the last tour. Lieutenant G. H. G. Crosfield was killed by the former when out on patrol ; Serjeant Ledward, although himself wounded, and Corporal O'Hara tried to bring in the body but were unable to do so. In the morning Serjeant Cooke and Corporal Saunders went out in broad daylight as far as the enemy wire, but were unable to bring in the body until evening. For this the former received a Bar to the Military Medal, and the latter the Medal. From the 27th to the 31st there was another stay in Schramm Barracks and then a return to camp at Bois des Bœufs. Casualties during the month, in addition to those mentioned, were 2nd-Lieutenant A. C. Turner and ten other ranks killed ; Captain F. T. Hill and seventeen other ranks wounded.

On the last day of January Rifleman Burtenshaw, "one of 'C' Company's famous pair of stretcher-bearers," was, unfortunately, killed. During this month one Military Cross, one D.C.M., one M.S.M. and one Belgian Croix de Guerre were awarded.

After the usual work the Battalion marched on February 5th eleven miles to billets in Simencourt, south-west of Arras, where it carried out training until the end of the month.

During this time the Army Rifle Association Platoon Competition was fired, the winning platoon in the Battalion being second in the brigade. Several schemes were carried out, of which one was a counter-attack by the 1st Bn. Somerset L.I. and First Battalion against the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. representing the enemy who has taken the front-line system—an interesting exercise in view of subsequent events.

On February 14th Major H. S. C. Peyton, M.C., left the Battalion to

assume command of the Second Battalion, having been second-in-command to Colonel Fellowes for eighteen months.

Training continued at Simencourt until March 11th, when the Battalion moved into a new Nissen hut camp at Berneville, where it was resumed. At this time there were obvious signs that the Higher Command anticipated that the great attack was imminent. Many defence schemes were drawn up and reconnaissances carried out not only of the corps front (XVIIth) but also those of neighbouring corps. The final scheme envisaged nine different eventualities.

Breakfasts had to be before 7.0 a.m. daily and all kits packed, tools and S.A.A. issued; apparently this energy gradually wore off and, by March 17th, life became normal. On the 20th, after a night in Schramm Barracks, the Battalion relieved the 2nd Bn. Grenadier Guards in Stirling Camp, north of Athies, and Pudding Trench, north-west of Fampoux. On March 21st, at 5.10 a.m., a heavy bombardment opened. There was no infantry action but the First Battalion "stood to."

The Second
Battalion.

The Second Battalion left Bellevue, behind Passchendaele, on January 3rd and moved by train from Wielte to camp at Brandhoek, whence, after cleaning up, it returned to the Wielte-St. Jean area on the 7th to be employed on working-parties. On the 15th it went once more to Bellevue and on that day Lieut.-Colonel Cole was wounded by shell-fire, Captain F. D. R. Milne assuming command.

Next day it went into the front line (left sub-sector, Passchendaele), where it found the condition of the posts extremely bad. It was relieved on the 18th and, moving by rail from Wielte to Abeele, went into billets east of Steenvoorde. On the 19th Major S. A. Hadland took over command.

Normal training continued until the end of the month, the Battalion receiving pats on the back for its work behind the line, Captain H. Heaton-Ellis's company getting special mention, and also for the condition and turn-out of its Transport.

In addition to Colonel Cole the Battalion during the month lost 2nd-Lieutenants A. G. Sutton, G. E. Collins, W. M. Gardiner (the latter four days after joining the Battalion) and six other ranks killed, seventeen other ranks wounded and seven missing. Two Military Crosses were awarded during the month and Captain and Quartermaster J. H. Alldridge, M.C., was promoted major for distinguished conduct in the field.

On February 2nd the Battalion marched to Poperinghe and was billeted in the Rue de Bruges. Daily parties of six officers and one hundred and seventy men were found for work in the Army Battle Zone until the 12th, when the Battalion marched to "B" Camp, Brandhoek, for two days'

cleaning up. On the 4th Captain I. C. Maclean, D.S.O., M.C., had contrived to rejoin the Battalion as medical officer and, on the 14th, Major H. S. C. Peyton, M.C., joined and assumed command of the Second Battalion, which he had joined as a 2nd lieutenant on first appointment, less than seven years before. On the 15th the Battalion found itself at Passchendaele, the centre battalion of the 8th Divisional front. There were occasional heavy enemy barrages and concentrations of H.E. and gas, the latter including specimens of "Blue Cross." Otherwise the tour was uneventful, except for an abortive enemy raid, and on the 19th the Battalion returned to "B" Camp for a rest and cleaning up. Another similar tour in the same trenches followed from the 23rd to the 27th, when "B" Camp once more became the Battalion's resting-place. On this date Major A. E. Wass, M.C., joined for duty as second-in-command and took over command —Colonel Peyton having proceeded on leave. During February 2nd-Lieutenant S. K. Moore and five other ranks were killed and sixteen other ranks wounded.

From March 3rd the Battalion did one more tour, this time in support, and having had seven other ranks killed and six wounded, moved on the 7th by 'bus to Steenvoorde, where it remained until the 11th. On that day, by road and rail, it moved to Tilques, where it remained training until March 21st. The 8th Division was then in G.H.Q. Reserve.

**The Third
Battalion.**

On January 2nd, 1918, the Third Battalion moved from Vendelles into divisional reserve at Hancourt. Here some training was attempted but that soon had to give place to work; one of the points noted by Sir Douglas Haig was the conflict between the desire for training and the necessity for work. There was, therefore, little training for the Battalion which worked at Hancourt and at Vendelles, whither it had returned on the 8th, until the 12th, when it went into the front line east of Hargicourt with one company of the 12th Bn. Royal Fusiliers, attached.

On the 15th "D" Company went back to Hervilly to practise for an impending raid and next day the Battalion went to Templeux quarries, leaving "A" Company attached to the relieving battalion, the 12th Bn. Royal Fusiliers. There was more work on trenches in preparation for the raid and on the 19th "D" Company moved up to carry out the raid.

Raid at Malakoff

Farm.

January 20th,

1918.

104th Field Company R.E.

The objective of the raid was the German front line

and support trenches east of Malakoff Farm, and the

strength of the party was two officers and forty-six other

ranks of "D" Company with five other ranks of the

The party was told off into four groups, of which two were to form blocks, a third to mop up the front-line trench and the fourth to go forward to the support line. Zero hour was 6.45 a.m. on January 20th.

One party could find no gap in the enemy wire after moving along it for fifty yards and, efforts to cut the wire proving ineffectual, eventually returned to our lines. The remainder were also held up at first by three rows of concertina wire, but a Rifleman, showing the true spirit of Peninsular days, trampled the wire down so that the rest of the party could follow: unfortunately, the name of the Rifleman is not recorded. On entering the trench two Germans were taken prisoner and others were seen in a dug-out; the Sappers threw into the dug-out a mobile charge which destroyed it and its occupants, but, unhappily, accounted also for two of the raiders who had not time to get clear of the entrance. The party destined for the support trench, leaving the front trench, turned right and left according to plan and one group, consisting of 2nd-Lieutenant J. Munday and eight other ranks, was not seen again; the other party found the support trench derelict and untenanted. Eventually the raiders withdrew with a loss of one other rank killed, two wounded, and one officer and ten other ranks missing.

The raid, which was carried out in appalling conditions of mud, had achieved its object in obtaining a valuable new identification with other useful information and the Third Battalion and the Sappers received their due meed of praise from the Divisional Commander.

That day the Battalion was re-united at Vraignes, where the remainder of the month was spent with a little training and much digging of the Green Line between Vraignes and Vermand. This latter employment continued until February 6th, when the Battalion returned to the trenches east of Hargicourt, where it remained until the 14th, when it moved into brigade reserve at Vendelles, being employed daily in work on the front and support-line systems.

At this time there was an adjustment of the divisional front which, in future, would be held by all three brigades in the line; each brigade having one battalion in the outpost zone, one in the battle zone and one in reserve.

On February 23rd the Third Battalion moved into the outpost zone of the centre brigade east of Hargicourt, but rather further south than its previous trenches. On the 28th the Battalion went into brigade reserve at Montigny Farm, where "Alarm Action" was ordered; this was a practice manning of battle stations, but no moves took place. There had been some enemy activity during the month resulting in six other ranks being killed and six wounded.

Among other reinforcements during February, there are recorded Riflemen A. Breedon, 1st Violin (late, Theatre Royal, Drury Lane); E. Fawcett, Violoncello (late, Scottish Symphony Orchestra), and J. M. Pollock, Violoncello (late, Trocadero Restaurant), whose arrival brought the Battalion String Band up to full strength. The Band played several times at the 24th and Cavalry Divisional H.Q.

On March 1st the Battalion marched some seven miles to Montecourt, on the Omignon River, near Monchy Lagache. Training here consisted largely of tactical exercises, and opportunity was also taken of holding brigade sports and a horse show, the Third Battalion winning a large number of the events.

On March 12th the Battalion relieved dismounted cavalry in the Vadencourt sector with "D" Company in front line, "A" in support, "B" and "C" in reserve at Vadencourt and Battalion H.Q. in Cookers Quarry. The 17th Brigade was the left brigade of the 24th Division, having the 72nd Brigade on its right and the 199th Brigade (66th Division) on its left; the Third Battalion was in the right sub-sector of the brigade front with the 1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers in the left sub-sector. It will be observed that the method of holding the line had been altered from that adopted in February.

At 2.30 a.m. on March 15th "Alarm Action" was carried out in accordance with which Battalion H.Q. moved to Caubrières Wood, one thousand yards south of Le Verguier.

On March 20th information was received that the enemy intended to attack on the morning of the 21st and that a heavy bombardment including a large number of gas shells might be expected.

On that night the Third Battalion was disposed with "B" Company holding the outpost line, "C" in support with H.Q. in Cookers Quarry, "A" and "D" in reserve at Vadencourt and Battalion H.Q. at the western edge of Caubrières Wood.

The 24th Division was now in the XIXth Corps.

The 14th Division. At the beginning of January, 1918, the 14th Division started on its move south. Between the 1st and 3rd the three Battalions of the Regiment entrained at St. Omer and arrived at their destinations which were for the Seventh Battalion Cerisy, for the Eighth Sailly-le-Sec, and for the Ninth Cappy—along the banks of the Somme east of Corbie; the march from detraining points was particularly arduous owing to the slippery state of the roads. All three settled down to such training and other diversions as the weather permitted.

The Seventh Battalion had the advantage of being near the VIIth

Corps Convalescent Camp, whose commanding officer allowed the use of the camp marquees for various purposes, including a smoking concert, when the whole Battalion was accommodated for the first time in its history. The serjeants of the Battalion celebrated the unique occasion of being billeted with a battery of their own guns by entertaining the serjeants of C.47 Battery to dinner. The Eighth and Ninth Battalions record little during this period.

On January 22nd the 14th Division began to march south, a movement resulting from the decision that the British Army should take over from the French an additional twenty-eight miles of front.

The division must have been in good marching-trim for the daily distances covered were long and the going bad. Marches of fourteen miles were common, whilst the Seventh Battalion on the 24th covered twenty-four miles, during which only six men fell out, of whom three fell from exhaustion, and the Eighth Battalion, on the same day, marched seventeen miles, with only one man falling out. Eventually, by the 25th, the Seventh Battalion had arrived at Jussy, the Eighth at Clastres with two companies at Lizerolles near by, and the Ninth halted—but not for long—at Bouchoir (six miles from Roye on the Amiens road).

The 14th Division relieved the 154th and a small portion of the 62nd French Divisions on a front extending from Le Vert Chasseur (two thousand five hundred yards north of Vendeuil on the Oise) to a point one thousand yards west of Itancourt, all three brigades being in the line, each disposed in depth, from right to left the 43rd, 42nd, 41st.

The Seventh Battalion for the remainder of the month stayed at Jussy in brigade reserve and continued training; on the 29th two companies moved to Clastres.

On the 26th the Eighth Battalion went into the line relieving parts of the 413th and 416th French Infantry Regiments, occupying one thousand yards of trenches east of Urvillers in the right sub-sector of the 41st Brigade front. Two companies were in front line, "A" on the right and "D" on the left with "C" Company in support in a sunken road west of Urvillers and "B" in reserve at Essigny.

The remainder of the month was spent in the line in fine weather and quiet conditions, except for enemy aircraft activity. On the 28th there was a change in dispositions, Essigny being considered too far back for the reserve company; the latter was moved up to east of Urvillers to become support company, "C" Company remaining where it was and becoming reserve company.

During the month the Eighth Battalion was awarded one Military Cross, one Distinguished Conduct Medal and one Meritorious Service Medal.

On January 28th the Ninth Battalion moved to Flavy le Martel and next day to Jussy.

**Reduction of
Infantry Brigades
to Three
Battalions.**

On February 2nd the 41st Brigade suffered a sad dis-solution of a long-standing partnership, the 7th Bn. 60th being transferred to the 43rd Brigade. This was in accordance with the decision of the Army Council that infantry brigades should be reduced from four battalions to three. At about the same time the 5th Bn. The King's Shropshire Light Infantry disappears from the 42nd Brigade, but the nature of its fate is not recorded by the brigade.

On the departure of the 7th Bn. 60th the Seventh Battalion moved up to Clastres, La Sablière, and Essigny, and took its place as support battalion. At about 7.0 a.m., February 3rd, enemy aeroplane bombs killed four N.C.O.s and men and wounded four Riflemen.

The same day the Seventh Battalion relieved the Eighth in the line for a tour devoid of great interest. Patrolling was active—No-Man's-Land here being some five hundred yards wide—and there was much work to be done. On the 8th the enemy raided a post, wounding an A/Corporal and a Rifleman, the latter being missing and believed to be a prisoner; on the 15th the enemy attempted to repeat the performance but was driven off, leaving one badly wounded man to provide an identification.

On this day, the 15th, on relief by the 8th Bn. 60th, the Battalion went back into brigade support, in the same quarters as before, where much wiring was carried out until the 21st; it then relieved the Eighth Battalion in the left sub-sector, where it remained until the end of the month.

On the 28th it is recorded that "the enemy appears to be carrying out more registration shoots."

On February 3rd the Eighth Battalion, on relief by the Seventh, took the place of the latter in brigade support until the 9th, when it relieved the 8th Bn. 60th in the left sub-sector of the brigade front. The effect of the three-battalion brigade was, it will be observed, to send each battalion into the right and left sub-sectors alternately.

In the early hours of February 12th the enemy attempted to raid a post. Lieutenant J. A. Gould, who was out with a patrol, hearing the bombing, faced his patrol about in hopes of catching the retreating enemy; the latter, in superior numbers, contrived to get away after a fierce fight, leaving one wounded and one unwounded prisoner in our hands, and the N.C.O. commander of the party dead on our wire. Two "infernal machines" for blowing up dug-outs were also captured. Casualties to the Eighth Battalion were one man of the patrol wounded and of the front-line garrison one other.

rank killed, Captain H. R. Adair, 2nd-Lieutenant G. Brown and five other ranks wounded, with three other ranks missing.

On February 16th the battalions on the flanks closed in, each taking over a small portion of the Battalion's front, and, on the same night, "C" Company captured two escaped German prisoners who were making their way back to their own lines. On the 21st, as already recorded, the Seventh and Eighth Battalions changed places and the latter made no further move during the month.

On the 28th there was a practice alarm when the Battalion "stood to," prepared to move first, at fifteen minutes and, later, at one hour's notice. It will be remembered that the Third Battalion practised "Alarm Action" on the same night.

On February 2nd the Ninth Battalion relieved the 9th Bn. 60th in the right sub-sector of the 42nd Brigade front.

On the 7th it was relieved by the same battalion and went back to Montescourt in brigade support until the 12th, when it went into the left sub-sector, where it remained until the 23rd. The rest of the month was spent at Montescourt. The Battalion Diary records no incident of note.

At the end of February and the beginning of March there was a re-organization of the divisional scheme of defence, although a three-brigade front was still to be maintained.

The 41st Brigade was distributed as follows :—

Forward Zone : One battalion of which six platoons would be in the northern and eastern defences of Urvillers and the remainder in the Line of Resistance and Posts.

Battle Zone : One Battalion with one company at La Sablière ; one company at Essigny ; two companies at the railway cutting, west of Essigny.

Divisional Reserve : One battalion at Clastres.

The scheme of the 42nd Brigade was rather more elaborate. It refers to the line of heights extending generally from Urvillers by Lambay Farm to the Bois de Lambay with spurs jutting out both east and west. The retention of the ridge was considered to be of the greatest importance, for it dominated the whole of the front of the battle zone. This latter had the Forward Zone in front of it and the Rear Zone behind.

In the Forward Zone was included the Lambay Switch.* To it was

* The Lambay Switch was the high ground around Lambay Farm connecting the defences of Urvillers with those of Bois Lambay. There is nothing to show that any line had been dug, although trenches did exist.

allotted one battalion, of which one company was earmarked for the switch, besides machine-guns and trench-mortars.

The zone was organized in depth and consisted of :—

- (a) The front system.
- (b) A system of strong points.
- (c) Lambay Switch.

(a) consisted of a main line of resistance covered by an outpost line.
 (b) The strong points, three in number, were on the outskirts of Urvillers and along the St. Quentin-Vendeuil road.

Each post would have a garrison of not less than one platoon and its rôle was to hold out at all costs ; on no account would the garrison be used to reinforce the main line, or for counter-attack without orders from Brigade H.Q.

(c) The position of the Lambay Switch has already been indicated. The Battle Zone was the area between Benay and Essigny-le-Grand and would be manned by the support battalion from Montescourt. In emergency two companies of the 11th Bn. The King's Regiment (Pioneers) would occupy this zone pending the arrival of the support battalion, upon whose arrival they would be withdrawn into brigade reserve.

In the event of any indication or warning of a hostile attack the message, "Battle Zone take precautionary action," would be sent, upon receipt of which all troops detailed for the zone would be prepared to move at fifteen minutes' notice. With, or without, this preliminary, the order "Action" might be issued, in which case all troops would take up their positions.

The rear zone ran approximately along the western edge of the Crozat Canal.

By March 9th wire was being put up and the position placed in a state of defence.

From March 1st to the 5th the Seventh Battalion remained in the line ; on the 1st the S.O.S. was sent up by the artillery F.O.O.s, but no infantry action followed although the enemy barrage in reply resulted in four other ranks being killed and three wounded.

On the 5th the Seventh Battalion was relieved by the Eighth and went back to Clastres for work and training.

On the 12th the Seventh Battalion became support battalion once more with two companies in the railway cutting west of Essigny, one in that village, and one at La Sablière. Here it remained, working, until the 20th, on which night it occupied its battle positions.

The Eighth Battalion, on relieving the Seventh on March 5th, remained in the line until the 13th, when it was relieved by the 8th Bn. 60th and

returned to Clastres in brigade reserve ; the tour had been devoid of interest, the only casualty recorded being 2nd-Lieutenant A. R. Gray, who was wounded on the 11th. Up to the 20th the Eighth Battalion was employed chiefly in burying cables, but one platoon constructed a rifle range.

On March 1st the Ninth Battalion relieved the 9th Bn. 60th in the Itancourt sector and remained there until the 11th, when it went back to Montescourt.

On the 18th the Battalion moved to Jussy and, on the night of the 20th, manned the Battle Zone with H.Q. at Montescourt.

The 20th Division. It will be recalled that the 20th Division at the end of 1917 was in the Ypres area.

From January 1st the Tenth Battalion continued to work on the Corps Line and other tasks until the 7th, on which date the 20th Division relieved the 30th in the Polderhoek sector, the 59th Brigade being in divisional reserve.

The Tenth Battalion moved from Micmac Camp to Chippewa Camp near La Clytte until the 12th, when, the 59th Brigade relieving the 60th Brigade in the left sector, it moved by light railway and march-route to the support line, Battalion H.Q. being in Stirling Castle. On the 14th the Battalion took over the left front sub-sector with H.Q. at Inverness Copse, where it remained until the 17th, when it returned to the support line. On the 18th the 59th Brigade came out and the Tenth Battalion spent the remainder of the month in normal fashion with one week out of the line and two tours of front-line trenches with a tour of brigade support in between.

During its time out of the line a very successful concert was held with assistance from the " Verey Lights " ; it was well patronized and was much enjoyed by all ranks. On January 30th the Battalion returned to divisional reserve at Chippewa Camp.

During the month Lieut.-Colonel M. Morgan-Owen received the D.S.O. and R.S.-M. J. Winmill the M.C., whilst there were also awarded two D.C.M.s and two M.M.s.

Casualties were one Rifleman killed, 2nd-Lieutenants A. G. Sonnenthal and J. L. Scott wounded, as also were six other ranks, of whom one was C.S.-M. Fitzgerald.

**The Tenth
Battalion
Disbanded.**

And now the former procedure must be varied and the story of the Tenth Battalion carried on into February and for a very good reason, namely, that it had remaining but a few days of life.

The result of the re-organization of infantry brigades to the 7th Bn.

60th has been recorded ; the fate of the Tenth Battalion was to be worse, for, on February 3rd, orders were received that it was to be disbanded.*

The effect of such a blow is difficult of realization by those who have not themselves, perforce, bowed under it. When the decision was made is unknown, for the War Diary of the 59th Brigade allows the incident to pass entirely unrecorded ; were it not that in " distribution lists " of future Operation Orders the 2nd Bn. Scottish Rifles takes the place of the Tenth Battalion there would be nothing to show that any change had taken place.

There was, however, little time for vain regrets, for, according to orders, disintegration must begin next day.

The strength of the Battalion was, as would happen, higher than it had been for a considerable time, standing, as it did, at forty-five officers and eight hundred and fifty-eight other ranks with a " fighting strength " of thirty-seven officers and four hundred and thirty-seven other ranks.

There was much work to be done in the preparation of nominal rolls, but, so far as possible, complete companies were posted to Battalions and the drafts dispatched were as follows :—

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
Third Battalion	7	150
Eleventh „	9	182
Twelfth „	10	217†
Thirteenth „	10	197

leaving a surplus of four officers, five warrant officers, and fifty-five other ranks. The Transport was unposted and remained on brigade charge.

On February 4th the Eleventh Battalion draft left to join its Battalion in camp near Reninghelst, followed, on the 5th, by the Twelfth Battalion party bound for Forrester Camp, east of Dickebusch, and, on the 6th, by the Thirteenth Battalion contingent which also went to the latter camp. Finally, on February 8th, the draft for the Third Battalion entrained at La Clytte for its journey south.

On February 12th Lieut.-Colonel M. Morgan-Owen, D.S.O., returned from a commanding officers' conference at Flixecourt,‡ only to find his Battalion disbanded !

By February 21st the Tenth Battalion had disappeared. On that day Colonel Morgan-Owen, the R.S.-M., company serjeants-major, quarter-master-serjeants, and orderly room staff left for " A " Infantry Base Depôt, Havre, and all other details joined the 14th Entrenching Battalion at Wippenhoek.

* The 6th Bn. Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and the 10th Bn. 60th shared the same fate.

† Including the Band.

‡ The Fourth Army School of Instruction was at Flixecourt.

The Tenth Battalion War Diary sadly concludes :—

“ Thus has the Battalion history been cut short.

“ It was raised on September 26th, 1914, and came to France on July 21st, 1915, and, after a probationary period in the Ypres salient and elsewhere, took part with great distinction in the Somme Battle at Guillemont on September 3rd, 1916. In 1917 the Battalion fought in front of Metz and Havrincourt Wood, on March 30th, gaining the high ground in front of these places and so enabling a further attack to be launched in order to capture the village and outskirts of the wood (April 4th, 1917).

“ On August 14th-15th the Battalion, in conjunction with the Eleventh Battalion, forced the passage of the Steenbeek preparatory to the taking of Langemarck by the 20th Division and, on August 23rd, captured Eagle Trench, taking eight machine-guns and ninety “ sturm truppen ” prisoners. On November 20th, and succeeding days, it took part in the attack near Cambrai. The Battalion was one of the strongest in the Division and had quite recovered from the momentary shaking it received on November 30th when the Hun attacked in the Cambrai area.

“ Sic transit gloria mundi—yet the Battalion’s memory will never die.

(Signed) M. MORGAN-OWEN,

Licut.-Colonel.

Commanding, 10th (Service) Battalion
Rifle Brigade.”

At the Burgomaster’s Farm, Dickebusch, the Eleventh Battalion continued to work on the Corps Line until January 7th, when it moved to Ontario Camp, Zevecoten, with a view to doing a few days’ training.

On the 12th it went into brigade reserve at Torr Top Tunnels, west of Clonmel Copse, and, on the 14th, became right battalion of the left brigade in the line, Battalion H.Q. being in a pill-box near Herenthage Chateau, south of the Menin Road.

On the 16th the left front company’s trenches became flooded up to the men’s armpits and were evacuated ; that night the Battalion was relieved and returned to Torr Top Tunnels. On the 19th there was a move into divisional reserve at Forrester Camp, until the 24th, when it returned to the front line. During this tour one unlucky shell caused “ D ” Company five casualties, of whom three died of wounds.

The remainder of the month was spent in much the same way, forty-eight hours of the front line alternating with the same period in support.

By January 31st the Eleventh Battalion was in divisional reserve at Ontario Camp.

During the month the Battalion was awarded two M.C.s, three D.C.M.s,

six M.M.s and one Bar to the M.M. Casualties were five other ranks killed and twenty-seven wounded.

On January 1st, 1918, the War Diary of the Twelfth Battalion records the fact that it is New Year's Day. The Battalion remained at Lynde until the 5th, when it moved to Forrester Camp, whence on the 6th it went into support in the Clapham Junction-Bodmin Copse area, the 20th Division relieving the 30th. Most of the men were in pill-boxes. The day-to-day life of the Battalion will not be described ; suffice it that the present system of relief was that two battalions were in front line and two in support, these changing places after three days. After six days the 59th and 60th Brigades changed places.

On the night of the 9th/10th the 37th Division on the right carried out two raids ; the first did not provoke much retaliation, but the second, at 4.20 a.m., brought a heavy reply in the form of artillery and trench-mortar activity, resulting in five other ranks being killed and 2nd-Lieutenants J. M. Allan, J. P. Shannon, and seventeen other ranks being wounded.*

On January 18th the system of relief was changed, the period in the line and support being shortened to two days.

At one period the Twelfth Battalion had the New Zealand Rifle Brigade next in the line on its left and visiting patrols were exchanged nightly ; each battalion was on a spur with a swamp between the spurs. During the period of thaw, already recorded, there was much difficulty in obtaining gum-boots, resulting in some cases of trench-feet. When out of the line the Battalion played a number of games of football, winning them all, including the Brigade Inter-Company Cup, which was won by "C" Company.

On January 31st the Twelfth Battalion was back in the front line in the left sub-sector, Battalion H.Q. being on the Menin Road, in the centre of Inverness Copse.

On January 8th the Battalion lost its padre, Rev. C. N. Were, who had only joined a few weeks before ; he was found dead in bed.

The Eleventh Battalion remained at Ontario Camp until February 5th. The Diary records the arrival of the Tenth Battalion draft on February 4th, but of 192 other ranks posted only 89 actually joined—the rest, presumably, being "on command."

Existence, in and out of the line, continued along normal lines until on February 14th the Battalion entrained at Dickebusch for Ebblinghem,

* Vide p. 228. The raids were carried out by the 13th Bn. 60th and the Thirteenth Battalion.

whence it marched to billets in Wallon Cappel and Morbecques. The next day Lieutenant E. P. Troy, M.O.R.C., U.S.A., who had been medical officer to the Battalion, left and Captain E. Henry, R.A.M.C., took his place.

Training was undertaken until the 20th, when the Battalion was railed from Steenbecque to Nesle and thence moved into comfortable huts and billets at Candor, some eight miles to the south and just off the Roye-Noyon road. Here training was continued, the Battalion also undertaking the construction of baths, a laundry and a 200 yards range receiving, for the latter work, the compliments of the Divisional Commander.

The 20th Division was now in the XVIIIth Corps of the Fifth Army and the Eleventh Battalion, like its sister Battalions in the south, on February 28th, had a practice "Alert."

The Twelfth Battalion spent February in much the same fashion as the Eleventh.

It records the arrival of the Tenth Battalion draft, as also the fact that the draft contained the Band. Whilst out of the line the Battalion hardly played "The New Zealanders" (N.Z.R.B.?) at Rugby and contrived to lose by 26 points to nil.

On the 21st the Battalion moved south by rail to Nesle and thence marched three miles south-east to good billets in Moyencourt, where it finished the month.

During February the machine-gun companies of the 20th Division were formed into the 20th Bn. Machine Gun Corps and Lieut.-Colonel H. L. Riley,* D.S.O., left the Twelfth Battalion to assume command; he was succeeded by Lieut.-Colonel J. P. Breckon and on the 19th, on the latter proceeding home on one month's leave, command of the Twelfth Battalion devolved upon Captain Chadwick, M.C.

From March 1st the Eleventh Battalion remained at Candor, carrying out vigorous training in exceptionally good weather.

The area was well suited for training and conditions were such that much could be done for the men's comfort in the way of baths, dining-rooms, canteens and—disinfectors. There were brigade and battalion sports and the Army Commander (General Sir Hubert Gough) inspected the Battalion.

Frequent reconnaissances of the battle zone, west of St. Quentin, were carried out by officers and time passed pleasantly enough until March 20th.

About midday on that day, the 20th, the Battalion was "alarmed"

* Colonel Riley had commanded the Twelfth Battalion since the Battle of the Somme, September, 1916.

and ordered to march to Ognolles (midway between Candor and Nesle) and there it spent the night.

The Twelfth Battalion remained at Moyencourt until March 6th, when it moved to St. Sulpice, a suburb of Ham. Here it spent most of its time working on the Ham defences, although there were certain amusements as well and a little training. On the 7th Lieut.-Colonel A. F. C. MacLachlan, D.S.O., 60th Rifles, joined the Battalion and assumed command.

On the 10th the Battalion was placed under twelve hours' notice to move and on the 17th, true to its tradition, the 60th Brigade held a horse show. The entries were remarkably good and the locally-printed programme reveals the names of many distinguished exhibitors, including that of "Maj.-Gén. Sir Cooper": the Battalion Diary records with triumph that "A" Company's cooker won in its Class.

At 8.30 p.m. on March 20th, the Twelfth Battalion received orders for a "Test Move" and accordingly formed up, with Transport loaded, on the St. Sulphice-St. Quentin road.

Apparently it returned to billets for the night.

Before leaving the 20th Division it may be convenient to record here, shortly, what was to be its intended rôle in case of an enemy attack on a large scale.

The Division was in G.H.Q. Reserve,* but in case of an attack upon the XVIIIth Corps front the Corps Commander (Lieut.-General Sir F. I. Maxse) had the right to call upon it.

The XVIIIth Corps contained, from right to left, the 36th, 30th, and 61st Divisions, having upon its right the IIIrd Corps and, on its left, the XIXth.

"The 20th Division, if called upon to support this line, was to move forward ready to man the rear zone defences between the Somme and the Omignon Rivers, from St. Simon to Trefcon." †

Within the division it was decided that this line should be held with the 61st Brigade on the right, the 60th Brigade in the centre and the 59th Brigade on the left.

Without going into too great detail, it may be stated that the effect of this upon the 60th Brigade was that its first move would be to the Fluquières, Douchy, and Aubigny area, the Twelfth Battalion proceeding to the first-named place. Thence, if necessary, it would occupy the line from

* The 20th Division was fifteen miles behind the front of the XVIIIth Corps. Sir Hubert Gough wished to move it five to eight miles further north to Ham and beyond, but G.H.Q. refused. Vide "The Fifth Army," pp. 251-2.

† "History of the 20th (Light) Division."

west of Happencourt to east of Vaux with all three battalions in the line.

The effect upon the 59th Brigade was that its first move would be to a billeting area further forward, the Eleventh Battalion going to Ognolles—as has been seen. Thereafter a line would be taken up in the defensive system between Vaux and Villéveque with two battalions in front and the Eleventh Battalion behind with two companies in the Redoubt position, north and east of Germaine, and two in reserve positions immediately east of Lanchy. It had, however, been foreseen that a further possible withdrawal might become desirable or necessary; so the Bray-St. Christophe-Douilly line was selected as the next bound.

In the event of this withdrawal taking place the two forward battalions were to fall back through the Eleventh Battalion which would, in its turn and if forced to do so, withdraw, establishing two companies in defensive positions at Toulle-Sancourt and two at Matigny, thus forming two redoubts behind the Bray-Douilly line.

Such was the action proposed for the 20th Division when the great blow fell.

**The Thirteenth
Battalion.**

On January 1st, 1918, the Thirteenth Battalion celebrated Christmas Day at Locre. It remained in Curragh Camp until the 5th, when it went into the line in Bulgar and Bitter Woods, the 37th Division being on the right of the 20th as already noted. At this time a party of four officers and seventy other ranks was being trained for a raid which was to take place on the night of January 9th/10th. There were to be two raids that night, the first to be carried out at 12.30 a.m. by the 13th Bn. 60th and the second by the Thirteenth Battalion at 4.30 a.m. The same barrage was to be put down for each raid along the whole brigade front, in the hope that the enemy would be misled regarding the point of entry of the second raid. Very complete orders were issued for the raid, but they are too long to quote in full. The objective was a group of dug-outs at the cross-roads fifteen hundred yards north-west of Zandvoorde.

The party, which had now increased to five officers and eighty-one other ranks, was divided into an advance party, a patrol party, a flank party (in two sections), a storming party (in three sections each under an officer), and a support party.

After the advance party had moved out and marked the forming-up place with tape the patrol party would, at 2.30 a.m., move southwards to patrol and clear the ground of any enemy west of the Bassevillebeek. Next the flank party would move out and then the storming party. The latter

was not to stay in the enemy lines for more than twelve minutes and would be recalled by the Battalion Call on the bugle.

The preliminaries all went according to plan and the storming party rushed the cross-roads and penetrated the wire. It then came under heavy machine-gun fire and found itself confronted with a breast-work which the enemy was holding in strength. A bombing-fight took place in which many casualties were caused to the enemy and the machine-gun knocked out. The left section of the flanking party attempted to out-flank the enemy but failed after losing its commander and second-in-command. Further progress being impossible, the party withdrew, having had 2nd-Lieutenant J. F. Spence and two other ranks wounded with three missing, of whom two were believed killed and one believed wounded.

The account closes with the remark that the enemy's barrage on our shell-hole line was much more intense than during the earlier raid—a fact already noted by the Twelfth Battalion.*

On January 11th the Thirteenth Battalion was relieved by a battalion of the 12th Australian Infantry Brigade and moved to Ridge Wood Camp. On the 12th it moved by rail to Ebblinghem and marched to billets in La Sablonière, where it remained until the end of the month carrying out training. On January 31st battalion sports were held.

During the month Lieut.-Colonel W. R. Stewart, M.C., received the D.S.O., Captain C. Nicholson, R.A.M.C., and 2nd-Lieutenant E. McD. Campbell "Mentions" (the latter had been killed in action), whilst four M.M.s were awarded. Casualties during January were four officers and forty-seven other ranks.

On February 2nd brigade sports were held when the Thirteenth Battalion scored more points than the other units in the brigade combined. On the 4th, re-organization reft the 13th Bn. Royal Fusiliers from its comrades in the 111th Brigade and on the same day the Battalion moved to Forrester and Scottish Wood Camps in the Dickebusch area, where on the 6th it received the draft from the Tenth Battalion.

On the 10th it moved to Manawatu Camp, just south of Ypres, returning on the 16th to Scottish Wood Camp. From the 5th to the 20th the Battalion was employed, day and night, at work on strong points and carrying R.E. material. On February 21st the Thirteenth Battalion moved into brigade support with H.Q. in Hooge Crater; here there was more work until the 27th, when it went into the front line in the Polderhoek sector.

During February 2nd-Lieutenant P. F. Davy received the Belgian

* It has been seen that the Twelfth Battalion's casualties were considerably more serious.
Vide p. 224.

Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Couronne and the Belgian Croix-de-Guerre and Serjeant Balchin, W., the Croix-de-Guerre; one M.C. and one D.C.M. also were awarded. Casualties had been two officers and sixty-nine other ranks.

Little is recorded of the doings of the Thirteenth Battalion in March, although ninety-seven casualties were suffered during the first three weeks.

The first spell in the front line lasted until March 6th, when it returned to Manawatu Camp; on the 8th the enemy attacked on the brigade front and the Battalion was moved up in support but, not being required, returned on the 9th. From the 11th to the 17th it was in the front line with H.Q. in Glencorse Wood, returning on the latter date into support.

Here, on March 20th, was the Thirteenth Battalion with H.Q. in Hooge Crater and in the Second Army.*

**The Sixteenth
Battalion.**

There remains the story of one battalion only, the Sixteenth, before the record is complete up to the fateful night of March 20th. The Sixteenth Battalion came out of the line in the Poelcapelle-Westroosebeke sector on January 3rd and became battalion in brigade reserve at Hilltop Farm, north-west of Wieltje, until the 7th, when it marched back to camp at Hospital Farm, south-west of Elverdinghe, the 117th Brigade being in divisional reserve. It remained there, finding working-parties in the forward area until the 15th, when it returned to Hilltop Farm. Except for thirty-six hours spent in the corps line, there was no move until the 21st, when it entrained at St. Jean for Railhoek, marching thence to Road Camp, east of Watou. On January 24th the Sixteenth Battalion at last left the Ypres area in which it had served continuously for fourteen months, since leaving the Battle of the Ancre in November, 1916. Entraining at Proven, it arrived on the morning of the 25th at Méricourt l'Abbé—on the Ancre—and marched to huts in Cappy. On the 29th it entrained near Carnoy for Péronne, marching thence to camp near Moislains.

On the 30th the Battalion went into the line in the left sub-sector of the Vauzelette Farm-Gouzeaucourt sector.

There is little to record of February; tours in the line alternated with periods in support in Peizière, or in the railway embankment near by, and in reserve at Heudicourt. During the month the 17th Bn. Sherwood Foresters was disbanded, with the result that battalions occupied the

* Vide "Military Operations," 1918, p. 115, Footnote 3. The name had been changed back, from Fourth Army, when General Plumer again took over the Flanders front on his return from Italy on 17th March, and General Rawlinson went to Versailles.

right and left sub-sectors alternately. On the last day of the month the Battalion carried out a raid with a party of two officers and thirty-four other ranks. The post raided was found to be unoccupied and the raiders withdrew with no prisoners and no casualties. That night the Battalion came out and went to Franklin Camp, Sorel-le-Grand, the 39th Division being relieved by the 21st and going to the VIIth Corps, Fifth Army.

During the month the total casualties were two other ranks killed and Captain S. J. Powers and nine other ranks wounded.

The 117th Brigade was now in divisional reserve to the left sector of the VIIth Corps battle front, the Corps Commander being Lieut.-General Sir Walter Congreve, V.C.

From March 1st, for ten days, the Battalion was engaged in digging lines of trenches from Havrincourt Wood towards Revelon Farm (just north-east of Heudicourt), moving to the last-named place on the 11th, on which day also the 39th Division became G.H.Q. Reserve. From the 11th to the 20th there was more trench-digging and wiring from Revelon Farm southwards to the west of Peiziére, the afternoons and evenings being devoted to musketry.

Meanwhile, in consequence of being in G.H.Q. Reserve, on March 13th orders were issued regarding action in case of an attack.

In the event of such attack falling upon the VIIth Corps front the 117th Brigade would be withdrawn behind the battle zone and would "clear all villages," by which it is presumed was meant keep clear of villages. On receipt of the order "Assemble," battalions would move to their assembly positions, which, in the case of the Sixteenth Battalion, would be in a sunken road just south of Heudicourt.

In the event of attack on the front of another corps, the brigade would proceed by 'bus to Péronne-Flamicourt and thence by rail to wherever it was wanted.

These orders were subsequently altered, the scope of possible action being considerably enlarged, but it is unnecessary to go into all the details. One change affected the Sixteenth Battalion intimately; it having been discovered that its place of assembly, the sunken road, was in full view of the enemy from Vaucelette Farm, a new position was assigned under cover of a bushy bank south of Metz-en-Couture.

So, presumably, the Sixteenth Battalion devoted the afternoon and evening of March 20th to musketry—a most riflemanlike way of spending the eve of the great attack.

Thus was set the stage for the next great act.

The Eve of the
German Offensive.
March 20th, 1918.

It may not be out of place to recall here, once more, the positions of the Battalions of the Regiment on the night of March 20th. These will be described from south to north almost, but not exactly, in the order in which the Battalions became engaged.

On the right of the Fifth Army (General Sir H. Gough) stood the IIIrd Corps (Lieut.-General Sir R. Butler), the left of its three divisions being the 14th with the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Battalions south of St. Quentin, the Eighth in reserve at Clastres, the other two manning their battle positions.

Next, in the XVIIIth Corps (Lieut.-General Sir F. I. Maxse), came the Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions of the 20th Division, which, although nominally in G.H.Q. Reserve, was at General Maxse's disposal in the event of an enemy attack on the front of his corps; at midday on March 20th the Eleventh Battalion had marched to Ognolles and the Twelfth was that night still in billets at St. Sulpice.

To the north again lay the XIXth Corps (Lieut.-General Sir H. Watts), with, as the right-hand of its two divisions, the 24th, in which was the Third Battalion in the front line and disposed before and behind Cookers Quarry.

Further north, in G.H.Q. Reserve, was the 39th Division behind the front of the VIIth Corps (Lieut.-General Sir W. Congreve, V.C.), with the Sixteenth Battalion in Heudicourt.

Then, so far as this record is concerned, follows a long gap until the 4th Division is reached on the left of the XVIIth Corps (Lieut.-General Sir C. Fergusson) and on the extreme left of the Third Army (General Hon. Sir J. Byng). Here was the First Battalion in Stirling Camp and Pudding Trench, north of the River Scarpe.

In the Ypres area, and not immediately to be concerned with the battle, was the Thirteenth Battalion in support to the Glencorse Wood sector.

Lastly, the Second Battalion, on March 20th, was at Tilques, the 8th Division being in G.H.Q. Reserve.

On March 19th, 1918, definite information was obtained by the Fifth Army that the blow would fall on the 21st. As fall it did.

CHAPTER IX

THE GERMAN OFFENSIVE * †

March 21st, 1918.

ON March 21st, the 14th Division was disposed with all three brigades in the line—from right to left, 43rd, 42nd, 41st. On the right of the division was the 18th Division of its own, IIIrd, Corps, and on the left the 36th Division of the XVIIIth Corps.

It is hardly necessary to record here that a mist, which had arisen during the night, by morning had developed into a dense fog which, in some places, reduced visibility to ten yards.

The 14th Division. It has been seen that the system of defence on a widely extended front necessarily depended largely on mutual support by fire from neighbouring posts; the accident of fog rendered this system nugatory with results to the forward troops of the Fifth Army which are only too well known.

The Ninth Battalion, in the 42nd Brigade, was in divisional reserve, so attention may first be turned to the Seventh and Eighth Battalions in the 41st Brigade.

In the 41st Brigade the 8th Bn. 60th was in the forward zone, east and south-east of Urvillers, and as has been seen, the Seventh Battalion was in the battle zone, about Essigny, and the Eighth Battalion in brigade reserve about Clastres.

About 4.40 a.m. the enemy bombardment opened, a considerable number of gas-shells being included. The bombardment included all back areas

The Seventh Battalion Annihilated. such as Clastres, Montescourt, and Jussy, which had not previously been shelled since the division had occupied the sector. From that moment nothing was heard of, or from, the Seventh Battalion.

The War Diary of the 41st Brigade was “destroyed by enemy action” on this day and thereafter appears not to have been kept up for the remainder of the month.

The Seventh Battalion Diary, written perforce by one who was not present with it, states that repeated efforts to reach it made by the Eighth Battalion’s runners failed owing to the enemy barrage. Meanwhile the

* For the general course of the Battle up to and including March 26th, vide “Military Operations, 1918.”

† Map will be found facing p. 284.

Eighth Battalion, on the opening of the bombardment, was in its battle positions in Freddy and Fanny Trenches (six hundred to seven hundred yards south-west of Essigny) and the Ninth Battalion had moved to the railway embankment at Montescourt.

Although the enemy's infantry assault appears to have been delivered about 9.0 a.m. it was not until 11.47 a.m. that the first definite news reached H.Q. of the 14th Division. At that time a message arrived from the 41st Brigade to say that a Machine Gun Corps serjeant, of the 36th Division, had arrived with the report that posts a mile north-west of Urvillers were almost surrounded.

From then on until noon, other messages were received to the effect that the enemy had broken through the forward defences on the divisional front and also on that of the 36th Division and, at 12.20 p.m., the latter passed on a report that the enemy had been seen in the Grugies valley. By 1.22 p.m. it was apparent that the enemy had reached the battle zone along the whole of the divisional front.

Reports during the afternoon were conflicting ; at 2.56 p.m. the divisional artillery was ordered to fire into the south end of Essigny while an air-report,* timed 3.50 p.m., reported definitely that our troops were holding out north-east and east of Essigny and about La Sablière.

The Eighth and Ninth Battalions. The Eighth Battalion, meanwhile, had received news at about 10.0 a.m. that the enemy had taken Urvillers and later that he had occupied Manufacture Farm, on the left of the Battalion and just north of Essigny, and was advancing on the right flank also. Battalion H.Q. manned a trench with Lewis-guns but, except for slight machine-gun fire, the situation quietened down and the enemy attempted no further advance during the afternoon.

At 5.30 p.m. the front held by the 14th Division ran approximately from the sunken road eight hundred to fifteen hundred yards north of Hinacourt, thence just west of the Old Mill to the railway cutting due west of Essigny.

Two companies of the Ninth Battalion, in divisional reserve, had already been placed at the disposal of the 41st Brigade to assist in maintaining touch with the 36th Division ; the remaining two companies took up a position to the east of Clastres covering the heavy gun positions and acting as a link with the reserve troops of the 36th Division.

**The Withdrawal
behind the
Crozat Canal.**

Under instructions from the IIIrd Corps, the 14th Division at 9.15 p.m. issued orders for withdrawal to the Green Line—west of the Crozat Canal. The details of

* The fog appears to have thinned about 11.0 a.m.

the Seventh Battalion, under Major N. S. Thornton, had already, during the day, taken up a position on this line north-west of Jussy until relieved by the Eighth Battalion during the night.

The withdrawal took place at 11.30 p.m., the Eighth and Ninth Battalions each leaving one company as rearguard to follow at midnight. The movement was carried out without incident and, by the early hours of the morning, the Eighth Battalion, having passed through Clastres, was in position at Jussy and the Ninth was in billets at Petit Detroit.

The casualties of the Seventh Battalion on this day are recorded as twenty officers and five hundred and twenty-five other ranks missing; those of the Ninth Battalion were three other ranks killed, five wounded and two missing, whilst those of the Eighth Battalion are not given.

The 20th Division. In the 20th Division it has been seen that the Eleventh Battalion on the morning of March 21st was at Ognolles. During the day the Battalion moved forward according to the prearranged scheme to the Villers-St. Christophe area, marching via Cressy, Languevoisin, Voyennes, Matigny and Toulle; at 11.0 p.m. orders were received to man the defences of Germaine and Lanchy with two companies, and this was done by about 3.0 a.m. on the 22nd.

The Twelfth Battalion during the day of the 21st moved to Fluquières and by 11.0 p.m. was in position at the northern edge of the village. The enemy was shelling heavily and Captain F. Billington, Lieutenant F. J. Lockwood-Wingate and 2nd-Lieutenant D. M. Mitchell were wounded, there being some thirty other casualties.

The Transport "had rather a bad reception when bringing up rations but succeeded in delivering them."

The Third Battalion. The Third Battalion, it will be recalled, on March 21st was in the outpost line, facing north-east between Belenglise and Le Verguier, the latter village being outside its area.

The following account is taken from Lieut.-Colonel E. R. Kewley's report on the battle.

"On "Alarm Action" being received 'A' Company was to move up into support on the left of 'C' Company, whose H.Q. was in Cookers Quarry, whilst 'D' Company moved to Battalion H.Q. Unfortunately the deep dug-outs required for the above to be carried out were not completed. (It is questionable whether the defences of any portion of the British line are ever completed owing to the frequent changes which are made.) The two companies at Vadencourt had orders to move to their

alarm positions, should they be heavily shelled, without waiting for the order to move.

"At 4.40 a.m. on the morning of March 21st the enemy opened a most intense bombardment on the whole front, many places which had never been registered receiving very severe handling, one such being Battalion H.Q. Vadencourt was also heavily shelled and the two companies there had great difficulty in moving to their alarm positions, the more so as all ranks had by now to wear gas-masks. 'D' Company, on arrival at Battalion H.Q., was ordered to proceed to a deep dug-out in the valley to the north of Caubrières Wood, as the area around H.Q. was too dangerous to remain in.

"All telephone communication forward of Battalion H.Q. went in the first few minutes and, though the linemen worked unceasingly, it was never re-established: the fog prevented any use of visual which had been greatly relied on.

"As all records were destroyed during the battle when it appeared that the enemy would capture Battalion H.Q. it is difficult to give any times in the narrative.

"At —— the enemy took Dragoon Post from the rear, A/Corporal Bird managing to cut his way out and inform Company H.Q. that the enemy was advancing. This information was forwarded to Battalion H.Q. and a barrage was put down accordingly. The fog rendered the strong machine and Lewis-gun defence in front of the Red Line useless and it was not long before fighting for the Red Line began.

"This line was a peculiarly bad line consisting of a front with no field of fire and a few dug-outs in it with a system of 'carriage-drives' (i.e. very broad trenches only a few feet deep which were no protection from any sort of fire) behind it; as has been previously stated, the deep dug-outs which would have been useful were not completed.* The brigade had not long taken over the line and whoever had been organizing this area for defence seems to have entirely overlooked the golden rule of 'wire first, dug-outs second, trenches third.' This being so it is not surprising that the enemy quickly gained possession of the whole of this line with the exception of the ground actually round Cookers Quarry. Here 'C' Company, under Captain Fenner, put up a great resistance and it was not until about 6.30 p.m., when nearly surrounded, that the company was skilfully withdrawn, having inflicted very severe losses on the enemy and having entirely upset his time-table.

"On the left 'A' Company, reinforced by 'D,' rallied on a line just

* Vide "Military Operations, 1918," p. 123. The trenches found by General Edmonds on his reconnaissance were seven feet wide by one foot deep.

west of Dean Copse ; here, though there were no trenches, these companies put up a great fight against immense odds and only fell back step by step, again entirely upsetting the enemy's time-table.

" As the day drew on it was evident that the enemy would gradually wear down the resistance which the Battalion could put up and reinforcements were asked for in order to strengthen a line which it was decided to organize round Battalion H.Q. About 7.0 p.m. a runner stated that the enemy was in possession of Cookers Quarry and, about the same time, a message was received from the left companies that the enemy was gradually working round their flanks ; accordingly they were ordered to withdraw on to the H.Q. Line.

" It was now touch and go whether the reinforcements, or the enemy would arrive first ; fortunately the former did, consisting of a (dismounted) squadron of cavalry, a company of the 1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers, and a company of the 12th Bn. Sherwood Foresters. A line just west of Battalion H.Q. was now taken up with the above reinforcements and what was left of the Battalion—less 'C' Company which had withdrawn on Vadencourt where it was still heavily engaged and whence it retired fighting on Biencourt, eventually rejoining the Battalion at Smallfoot Wood.

" Battalion H.Q. now removed to Brigade H.Q. at Smallfoot Wood, having lost everything in the way of kit, etc., and all official papers having been destroyed.

" The above line was held throughout the night."

**The Sixteenth
Battalion.**

The Sixteenth Battalion, in camp at Heudicourt, was awakened on March 21st by a violent bombardment with H.E., shrapnel and gas of which the first shell penetrated the Signal office, killing the signalling serjeant and the majority of the Battalion Headquarters signallers. According to the scheme the Battalion moved back at once to its assembly position behind Heudicourt but, the place being heavily shelled, moved still further back to west of Sorel Wood.

That night it moved up, dug, and held a switch-line east of Saulcourt, the enemy heavily shelling the position.

**The First,
Thirteenth and
Second Battalions.**

As already recorded the First Battalion stood to at 5.0 a.m. on March 21st, but nothing further happened on that day beyond shelling of Arras by a high-velocity gun. As the Battalion did not become involved until the battle had been in progress for several days it will not be referred to again for the present.

The Thirteenth Battalion, in support in the Glencorse Wood sector, on

March 21st was unaffected by events further south and will likewise be left where it is for the moment.

As a fact, and to anticipate, the Thirteenth Battalion was not destined to be called upon for any serious operations until May.

Finally the Second Battalion at Tilques and in G.H.Q. Reserve, received orders on March 21st to entrain next day by "Strategical Train." *

The Situation on
the Evening of
March 21st, 1918.

Thus at the close of the active fighting on March 21st the situation of the Battalions of the Regiment engaged was as follows:—

The 14th Division in common with the remainder of the IIIrd Corps north of the River Oise, had been withdrawn to the Green Line, west of the Crozat Canal. The 41st Brigade was in front line and support, the Eighth Battalion being in position at Jussy where, during the night, it relieved the details of the Seventh Battalion. The Seventh Battalion itself no longer existed. The 42nd Brigade was in reserve, the Ninth Battalion being in billets at Petit Detroit.

In the 20th Division the Eleventh Battalion was manning the defences of Germaine and Lanchy, whilst the Twelfth was in position at the northern end of Fluquières.

The Third Battalion was holding a line west of Caubrières Wood with Battalion H.Q. at Smallfoot Wood, and, lastly, the Sixteenth Battalion, in its switch-line east of Saulcourt, was heavily shelled throughout the night.

The line of the Fifth Army had bent but had not been broken: the enemy was behind his time-table and had suffered heavy casualties to counter-balance his successes.

March 22nd, 1918. By morning of March 22nd the 14th Division had withdrawn across the Crozat Canal. The canal † "was a considerable obstacle, the breadth of the water being thirty to forty feet, and it was unfordable. Much of the country to the west was wooded and afforded cover from view, whilst to the east it was mostly open. In every way it afforded a good temporary line of defence. . . . Sufficient labour had not been available before the battle to create a strong line of defence behind the canal, although nominally it formed part of the Green Line.

* "Strategical" trains carried units and formations complete: "Tactical" trains, on the other hand, carried personnel only, all transport and animals proceeding by road, the troops being semi-immobile until the horses and vehicles arrived.

† "Military Operations, 1918."

"Little more had been done than to spitlock some trenches and erect at passages less than three thousand yards of slight wire entanglement in three blocks."

During the night and early morning there was some confusion regarding the responsibility for destroying the many bridges over the canal, some being the concern of the Fifth Army whilst the three railway bridges were that of French railway engineers. Eventually, chiefly through the energy of the Royal Engineers of the 14th Division, all the road bridges were destroyed and two out of the three railway bridges ; the largest of the latter, however, was not destroyed owing to lack of explosive and remained fit for the passage of infantry and light traffic.

Once more there was a thick fog during the night and early morning, screening the enemy's movements.

The Eighth Battalion crossed the canal between 1.0 a.m. and 2.0 a.m. and took up position on the canal bank, relieving the details of the Seventh Battalion which marched to Beaumont-en-Beine where, apparently, they remained until next day.

The Eighth Battalion was disposed on a front of about two thousand seven hundred yards with "A" Company on the right, "C" in the centre, "D" on the left and "B" in reserve at Flavy le Martel. In touch on the right were the 5th Lancers and 43rd Brigade, and on the left the 20th Division.

The enemy was quick to follow up the withdrawal and, by about 7.0 a.m., appeared on the canal whereupon two platoons of "B" Company were brought into the front line between "C" and "D" and two platoons moved up nearer the canal to a position on the Flavy-Chateau de Savriennois road. The position on the canal bank is described as very difficult ; there was little cover, great shortage of ammunition, and communications were very hazardous, every runner sent out being either killed or wounded.

At 9.0 a.m. an enemy patrol attempted to cross the canal but was driven off. The enemy maintained a heavy machine-gun barrage all day, especially down the Chateau Road and enfilading the canal bank. During the afternoon also the hostile artillery shelled the area between the canal and Flavy, causing, one way or another, heavy casualties to the Battalion.

At dusk the enemy again attempted to cross the canal but was repulsed by "D" Company with Lewis-gun fire, and this time it was the turn of the Germans to suffer heavy losses. About midnight an enemy patrol succeeded in crossing the canal and was then destroyed with the exception of three men taken prisoners.

At some time during the day, or night, the Ninth Battalion was moved to Flavy le Martel in support of the 41st Brigade, consisting now, it should

be remembered, of the Eighth Battalion only—apart from a few details. On arrival "D" Company formed a defensive flank on the right, "B" Company and two platoons of "A" relieved the Eighth Battalion on the canal bank,* whilst "C" Company took up a position in front of the railway embankment.

On the night of March 22nd Major-General W. H. Greenly took over command of the 14th Division vice Major-General Sir Victor Couper.

The 20th Division. In the 20th Division the Twelfth Battalion records no event of importance on March 22nd until 3.50 p.m., when the enemy attacked, causing the battalions on the right and left to fall back and eventually the Battalion to do the same. Two companies were obliged to fight their way back owing to being almost surrounded. It was whilst inspecting the companies' positions, just before the withdrawal, that Colonel A. F. C. MacLachlan was, unfortunately, killed by a bullet.

Alexander Fraser Campbell MacLachlan, born in July, 1875, was a younger brother of Brig.-General R. C. MacLachlan of the Regiment.

He went to Warre-Cornish's house at Eton in 1889 and, leaving in 1894, proceeded to Magdalen College, Oxford.

In 1899 he joined the 60th, becoming adjutant in 1907. Previous to this, for his services in South Africa from 1899 to 1902, he was awarded the D.S.O.; was mentioned in despatches and received the Queen's Medal with four clasps and the King's Medal with two.

He was wounded in September, 1914, but in 1915 was with the 3rd Bn. 60th in Macedonia until he was given command of the 13th Bn. Middlesex Regt., on the Doiran front. Invalided home, he returned to France, and, on March 7th, 1918, was appointed to the command of the Twelfth Battalion. † One of his immediate superiors wrote of him: "The Division did fine work and his Battalion did the best in the brigade, which had most to do with the retirement . . . the Battalion suffered severely . . . we can ill afford to lose men like him."

‡ Alec MacLachlan, like all his distinguished brothers,§ was an officer of the best type and a most gallant and charming companion.

During the Great War he received a Bar to the D.S.O.; the Serbian Order of Kara George "With Swords," and four mentions in despatches.

* The Eighth Battalion Diary makes no mention of this: possibly reinforced is the expression intended.

† "The King's Royal Rifle Corps Chronicle."

‡ *Ibid.*

§ Lieutenant L. C. MacLachlan, 60th Rifles, was killed at Rawalpindi in March, 1895, whilst playing polo, and Major N. C. MacLachlan, Seaforth Highlanders, accidentally killed whilst on the Mohmand Expedition, May, 1908.

At 6.15 p.m. the 60th Brigade received a message from the 20th Division to the effect that the 36th Division was withdrawing to the south side of the canal and at 7.30 p.m. the brigade was ordered to fall back to the line Bray-Aubigny-Villers St. Christophe. As a consequence the Battalion fell back to Aubigny, carrying out the movement successfully, making a stand at Mill Wood on the way, and inflicting serious casualties upon the enemy.

Meanwhile the Eleventh Battalion had remained in the defences of Germaine and Lanchy until about midday, when it was ordered to form up in the valley, east of Foreste and Auroir, with a view to counter-attacking in a south-easterly direction if the 60th Brigade front were broken.

Owing to events further north this counter-attack never materialized and, at about 7.0 p.m., the Battalion was ordered to withdraw to a line east of Matigny, which movement was duly carried out.

Between 10.30 p.m. and 11.0 p.m. both brigades received orders to fall back south of the Somme,* fighting a rear-guard action on the way. Units of the division were to move at 1.0 a.m. on the 23rd.

The Third
Battalion.

† "The Third Battalion held its line throughout the night of the 21st/22nd, but next morning Le Verguier, which had been very gallantly defended by the 8th Bn. The Queen's, having fallen, a general retirement through the Green Line was ordered, the Battalion being told to move via Flechin at about noon.

"It was somewhat difficult to disengage from the enemy at this time, but nevertheless the retirement was carried out without many casualties; it was very unfortunate that Captain Fenner, still in command of "C" Company, which had been ordered up to help the left flank when it was being hard pressed, was killed by a shell while on his way out.

"It is difficult to estimate the effect of the resistance of Captain Fenner and his company the previous day at Cookers Quarry.

"On arrival at Flechin very few of the division could be found on the Green Line, which, incidentally, was only about a foot deep; orders were, however, received to continue the retirement and the Battalion therefore proceeded to Vraignes and thence to Merancourt, which place it reached at 6.0 p.m. Here the Battalion went into huts and had teas; by this time all ranks were somewhat exhausted, having fought for about thirty-six hours on end, with very little chance of food, and having had to wear gas-masks continuously for four hours.

"After teas the Battalion was ordered to move to Montecourt (on

* The Somme here included both the river and the canal.

† Colonel Kewley's account.



GERMAN PRISONERS-OF-WAR.

March, 1918.

Imperial War Museum—Copyright.

the north bank of the Omignon River) where it went into huts for the night."

The Sixteenth Battalion. The Sixteenth Battalion, from its position near Saulcourt, saw that the division in front was beginning to withdraw. The Battalion covered its retirement and, at 11.0 a.m., the enemy was seen to be assembling north, south and east of the village.* Heavy fire was opened on him and severe casualties inflicted. Orders were received to hold on to the position and at 2.0 p.m., when it was certain that the Battalion was practically surrounded, still no orders had been received to withdraw. At 4.30 p.m. the enemy opened an intense bombardment, causing very heavy casualties and, at 5.0 p.m. delivered a strong attack from north, south and east.

A retirement was then ordered to an assembly position north-west of Tincourt Wood where the Battalion was re-organized; it then mustered about fifty-four strong.†

On March 22nd the Second Battalion marched from Tilques to Arques, where it entrained for the south.

The Situation on the Evening of March 22nd, 1918. So, when night fell on March 22nd, the Battalions in the Fifth Army were disposed thus: the Eighth Battalion was on the west bank of the Crozat Canal with the Ninth between the canal and Flavy le Martel; the Eleventh Battalion was holding a line east of Matigny and the Twelfth was at Aubigny; the Third Battalion was in huts at Montecourt; the Sixteenth was re-organizing near Tincourt Wood and the Second Battalion was in the train which was taking it to the battle area.

March 23rd, 1918. At 3.0 a.m. on March 23rd the details of the Seventh Battalion, consisting of shoemakers, tailors, pioneers, storemen and the remnants of the Battalion, moved to Petit Detroit, where they remained until 10.0 a.m., when a position in rear of Flavy le Martel was occupied. Here heavy fighting took place for some hours until withdrawal was compelled by the enemy having practically surrounded Flavy and the details' position; the latter fell back towards Cugny, hostile machine-gun and mortar fire coming from three directions and the enemy following up closely. After another two hours' stand near Cugny a further withdrawal became necessary to a position

* Presumably Saulcourt.

† A considerable number of men who had become temporarily detached appear to have rejoined later.

in front of Beaumont-en-Beine, where a number of French troops were already digging in.

The enemy attacked at midnight but was repulsed by fire from French 75's, rifles and machine-guns; the attack was accompanied by the blowing of bugles to spur the men on but the enemy sustained heavy losses.

It may be mentioned here that these French troops belonged to the 9th French Division which, according to an order from the IIIrd Corps, timed 2.20 a.m. on the 23rd, was to relieve the 14th Division on the night of the 23rd/24th. The relief, it will be seen presently, did not take place.

At 11.45 a.m. brigades were informed of this relief and told that the 9th French Division would shortly be forming up on the line Cugny-Detroit-Bleu-Faillouel. Brigades were to maintain their present positions as long as possible and, if forced to withdraw, to fight a rear-guard action to that line.

To return to the events of the early morning, under cover of a thick mist the enemy succeeded in crossing the canal and a line was taken up, according to the Eighth Battalion Diary, as follows; from left to right on the canal bank was "D" Company, thence, southwards, the 8th Bn. 60th, Seventh Battalion details, 11th Bn. The King's Regiment, half "B" Company, "A" Company, Ninth Battalion, half "C" Company (at the Sugar Factory) with half "C" and half "B" Companies in support.

At 10.0 a.m. the Eighth Battalion withdrew to the Flavy-Petit Detroit road with a rear-guard under Captain C. R. Gorell-Barnes in Flavy, where there was some street-fighting. Major F. E. Young, with the Battalion details, took up a position on the Flavy-Cugny road until about 3.0 p.m. when, the enemy having got round both flanks, a withdrawal became necessary. This took place through French troops on the Cugny-la-Neuville road, the movement of the Battalion being covered by Major Young and his party. At 7.0 p.m. the latter were forced to withdraw north-west through the 1st and 2nd Bns. Royal Irish Rifles (36th Division). At 7.30 p.m. the 36th Division was about Cugny with the 14th Division and 329th French Infantry Regiment continuing the line to the Bois de Genlis, which was held by the 1st French Cavalry Division.

At 10.0 p.m. the enemy attacked Cugny and forced the 36th Division to the high ground west of that village, Major Young and his details being now attached to the 36th Division which, incidentally, belonged to another corps—the XVIIIth.

The following notes are taken from a letter written by Captain C. E. Squire, who was with Major Young. Both these officers were wounded:

"There were only one hundred and thirty all ranks together with about eighty of the Seventh Battalion Details on the left and some sixty of the 8th Bn. 60th between Flavy and Cugny; there did not appear to be any

other troops at all but this body, with no bombs or rifle-grenades, only two Lewis-guns, and a limited amount of S.A.A., held in check strong enemy forces from 8.0 a.m. until dark. No ammunition was wasted, fire was controlled ; during the twelve hours' contact with the enemy three distinct positions were taken up within four hundred yards of each other and no withdrawal was made until large numbers of the enemy were round both flanks.

"Fire was so steady and deadly that the enemy never more than once dared to attempt a frontal attack and thus time was saved while he had to work round the flanks.

"The enemy appeared to consist of fresh troops in clean, new equipment.

"They advanced in columns of fours in companies according to a well-planned method. When fired upon their immediate action seemed almost automatic in its promptness and good order and had obviously been practised as a drill.*

"Their method of advancing by companies round the valleys, using dead ground to the full, was characteristic of new, well-trained, and fresh troops.

"These attacks were supported by artillery fire on our positions directed at times by as many as seven German aeroplanes at once which hovered above and fired Verey lights as signals. Light trench-mortars were also employed with great accuracy.

"But the most effective support was given to the advancing infantry by machine-guns which did not stay behind and merely provide overhead fire, as seems too often to be the rôle of our machine-guns, but which were brought right forward with the forward advanced patrols and, as soon as any piece of ground or part of a village was made good, the guns were mounted and caught our men as they fought the rear-guard action. Whenever any of our men, wounded or otherwise, attempted to get back to new positions, a hail of bullets swept the forward slopes of the ground behind. As many as twelve machine-guns would open from Flavy alone on to the north-east slopes of Le Haut du Bois.

"Considering that the enemy consisted of fresh troops, probably practised in open warfare, plentifully supplied with ammunition and greatly out-numbering our forces, and adding to this the fact that they had the support of artillery, light mortars, rifle-grenades, and machine-guns, it was no disgrace that such a handful of men had to withdraw. The most that we could hope to do was to delay the enemy's advance so as to give time for the supports to come up behind. This we did. . . ."

The letter concludes with these two notes :

* Unfortunately the letter does not say what the "immediate action" was.

"Serjeant Boughton was killed—an immense grief to me. He was a fine fellow.

"Rfn. Greenwell, 'A' Company Lewis-gunner, did splendid work—wounded while staying to the last to give covering fire while the rest got back to the rear position. He is probably a prisoner; his only thought was of other people. He said to me when all the rest had gone: 'Don't stay, sir, leave me and save yourself, I shall be all right.' His leg was broken and I thought it was my duty to go and rally the men in the next position."

From a letter written by Lieutenant J. A. Gould, M.C., who was, apparently, commanding "D" Company on the left, the ensuing extracts are made.

This officer describes his adventures during the night of the 22nd/23rd, whilst endeavouring to get in touch with a battalion of the 20th Division which was to have relieved the troops of the 14th Division as far as Jussy Bridge. In the end, however, daylight came with no sign of relief and Lieutenant Gould continues with the story of events of the 23rd.

"As the morning drew on the enemy, under cover of very heavy machine-gun fire, threw a one-man foot-bridge across the canal on our left flank. Fire was immediately brought to bear on the ends of this bridge by Vickers and Lewis-guns and a company of the enemy, massed on the far side of the bridge ready to cross, had heavy casualties. 2nd-Lieutenant T. Grant made the necessary arrangements for defending this bridge with great courage and judgment. At this juncture three of the enemy, who had apparently waded across the canal, were captured trying to gain a footing on our side; these were sent down to H.Q. with Rfn. Bennett.

"It was obvious shortly afterwards that the enemy had succeeded in effecting a lodgment on the south side of the canal as my position was enfiladed by machine-guns from the marsh to the right. . . .

"At about 11.30 a.m. I had word from my right platoon that the enemy was over-running the bank and I therefore ordered my company to fall back on to the left with the possibility of forming a defensive flank.

"On attempting to carry out this manœuvre, however, I found that a lodgment had been effected by the enemy well to the left; also my company was being subjected to 'Scissors' machine-gun fire. The only course open was a retirement through the marsh and this was commenced. No sign of the enemy, or our own troops, was seen until clear of the marsh and we were then fired on by our own troops (one man being hit) in the Army line.

"By crawling about five hundred yards, cavalry could be seen in action east (south?) of Jussy. The remainder of my company eventually managed to get into touch with some troops of the Somersets—20th Division right battalion."

Lieutenant Gould reported to the officer commanding this battalion and assisted his Battalion H.Q. to deny egress to the enemy from Annois along the railway. The C.O. of the Somerset L.I. was severely wounded and the second-in-command gave the order to withdraw as the left flank was in danger. This was done and a new line formed on the high ground to north and south of the railway to Ham.

During the night the enemy pushed forward and dug in about four hundred yards from our line.

Regarding events of March 23rd the information to be gleaned from the war diaries of the 42nd Brigade and Ninth Battalion is very meagre. In fact it may be summed up in the statement that by the evening the remnants of the 41st, 42nd, and 43rd Brigades were digging in on a line in front of Les Riez-de-Cugny, with the Brigadier, 41st Brigade, in command.

As regards the relief by the 9th French Infantry Division, promised by the IIIIrd Corps for that night, a staff officer of the 14th Division went to see that division on the subject. The French reported that they were in position and that there was no objection to our troops withdrawing into reserve ; on this being reported to the IIIIrd Corps the latter replied that our troops could not be relieved by the French "but will maintain troops in line with the French to ensure that no gaps exist."

The Ninth Battalion records as its casualties for the day : Captain Hon. A. M. Tennyson and twenty-one other ranks killed ; Captain A. G. Martin, M.C., and six other ranks missing, believed killed ; Captain S. H. Russell, 2nd-Lieutenants C. E. Swift, D. Mackintosh, A. M. Penman, G. W. Baker, W. L. McKechnie, P. F. Bayley, G. A. Wallace and sixty-one other ranks wounded ; Major J. H. Boardman, 2nd-Lieutenants W. McGeoch, H. Chandler and eight other ranks wounded and missing, with 2nd-Lieutenant R. Wilson and one hundred and seventy-nine other ranks missing.

The 20th Division. In the 20th Division it was not until 3.0 a.m. on March 23rd that the Eleventh Battalion received orders to withdraw from its position east of Matigny and to cross the Somme and canal by the bridges at Bethencourt ; this movement was carried out and the Battalion took up a position between the River d'Ingon and the main road in Bethencourt, where it was established at 5.0 a.m. Until daylight Lewis-guns were posted along the canal tow-path, one commanding Bethencourt Bridge, which had been blown up by the R.E. ; there were also two machine-guns in position near the bridge.

In the meanwhile the Twelfth Battalion had, during the early hours of the morning, fallen back towards Ham fighting a rear-guard action,

inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, and stampeding his transport which was coming guilelessly down the main St. Quentin-Ham road.

On arrival at Ham orders were received to cross the canal and take up a position on the canal bank to the south of Voyennes.

The two battalions held these positions throughout the day of March 23rd.

In the Eleventh Battalion area a platoon of a battalion* of the East Lancashire Regiment arrived at 10.0 a.m. and took up a position to guard the bridge-head and, at noon, a cavalry patrol returned from the east side of the canal and, fording the latter, reported the advance of German patrols. At 2.0 p.m. a heavy bombardment by artillery and trench-mortars was opened on to the Battalion's position and on Bethencourt under cover of which a number of small parties of the enemy were seen pushing down the hill under cover of the woods. Owing to the enemy artillery fire, and of our own which was shooting short, the Battalion, except on the left flank, fell back for one hundred and fifty yards. A small party of the enemy tried to cross the canal but was dispersed by Lewis-gun fire and, thereafter, no further attempt was made by the enemy during the remainder of the 23rd or during the night. At dusk the Eleventh Battalion re-occupied its original positions; the night was very quiet and patrols failed to find any trace of the enemy.

During the day the Twelfth Battalion was heavily shelled and suffered a considerable number of casualties, including 2nd-Lieutenant C. M. Clive-Smith. At 9.0 p.m. it was reported to the 60th Brigade that the enemy was advancing towards Esmery-Hallion to the right rear of the brigade's position. The 20th Division ordered a counter-attack which was carried out at about 1.30 p.m., chiefly, it would appear, by troops of the 61st Division under the orders of the 60th Brigade. The counter-attack captured Vertaines and, driving the enemy back on Ham station, restored the situation.

British aeroplanes crossed the lines and bombed the German positions at Offoy, but the effect could not be seen. The night passed without any further attacks and rations, water, etc., "arrived quite safely."

The movements of the Second Battalion must be followed next, for the 8th Division had, by the morning of March 23rd, arrived in the battle area.

The Second Battalion, detraining at Rosières-en-Santerre, was moved by lorries to Morchain. In the early hours of the 23rd the 25th Brigade received orders from the 8th Division to occupy the line of the west bank of the canal from Rouy-le-Grand to Pargny, both inclusive; this was to be in relief of troops

* The 2nd Battalion in the 25th Brigade: the 8th Division arrived behind this line during the morning.

of the 50th Division, who would then fall back. It will be observed that this line included the front already held by the Eleventh Battalion—from the River d'Ingon to Bethencourt—and that, hitherto, there has been no mention of the presence of the 50th Division.

Be that as it may, the battalions of the 25th Brigade moved off to occupy this line with the 2nd Bn. East Lancashire Regt. on the right,* 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. in the centre and the Second Battalion on the left. The Battalion opened out into artillery formation and advanced to Pargny, coming under heavy shell-fire whilst crossing the high ground above the river. On arrival it took over the line of the river and canal from south of Fontaine-les-Pargny to north of Pargny Bridge with "A," "B," and "C" Companies in the line and "D" in support. The events of the day are unrecorded, as also is the fact, in either war diary, that the Second and Eleventh Battalions were now less than half a mile apart.

Shortly before midnight an enemy patrol succeeded in rushing the bridge-head at Pargny and penetrated between the front and support line. An immediate counter-attack by parties of the Battalion and the 1st Bn. Worcestershire Regt. ejected this patrol, which lost eight men killed, two prisoners and two machine-guns captured.

Casualties during the day had been 2nd-Lieutenant E. B. Anstie killed; Lieutenant L. S. Chamberlen, M.C., 2nd-Lieutenants C. B. Keppie, and A. J. Sluman wounded and about sixty other ranks killed and wounded.

The Third Battalion, in its huts at Montecourt, at 4.0 a.m. on March 23rd was ordered to move at once to take up a position in reserve to the brigade, behind Monchy-Lagache.

The Third Battalion. † "This march was carried out in silence and without smoking—it was noticed that this rule for night marching was not observed by all units. The Battalion eventually took up a position to the west of Flez and was ordered to cover the retirement of the troops of several divisions over Falvy ‡ Bridge. About half an hour before it was time for the Battalion to start to retire the enemy could be seen coming on in masses over a distant ridge.

"Through some misunderstanding the battalion on our right started to retire too soon and for a moment the situation appeared dangerous; however, all ranks behaved with great coolness and the withdrawal was successfully carried out though at the later stages the Battalion was enfiladed by the enemy who had gained possession of the heights to the south-east of Falvy.

* Vide footnote on p. 246. This battalion found the platoon to guard the bridge-head at Bethencourt.

† Colonel Kewley's account.

‡ Falvy, it will be observed, is next to Pargny, where the Second Battalion was.

"By this time the exhaustion of the Battalion was becoming intense, but it was necessary, before halting, to get behind Hill 90, between the canal and Licourt; accordingly the march was continued until that village was reached. Here a halt was made and all ranks had dinners to the accompaniment of bursts of shrapnel which did not do any harm."

The night of the 23rd/24th was spent at Licourt.

**The Sixteenth
Battalion.**

During the night of March 22nd/23rd the Sixteenth Battalion was in support in its position north-west of Tincourt Wood.

At 8.0 a.m. a general withdrawal was ordered to the main Corps Line running through Doingt-Bussu-Aizecourt-le-Haut-Moislains-Manancourt and this was carried out. At 3.0 p.m. the right flank was again turned and a further retirement was ordered to Mont St. Quentin, where a strong position was taken up with the 118th Brigade on the right. The 117th Brigade had in line, from right to left, the 16th Bn. Sherwood Foresters, 17th Bn. 60th and the Sixteenth Battalion.

At this time the roads were blocked with transport moving from Mont St. Quentin to Clery. A stand was made on the ridge until the enemy was seen to be surrounding it, he having already occupied Péronne; a gradual withdrawal was then made to protect the Clery-Péronne road to allow the transport to get away. Every vehicle that had horses in it managed to escape. A stand was then made on the Clery-Péronne road for three to four hours.

When the transport had cleared away orders were received to withdraw over the wooden bridge at Clery to the south side of the Somme. Between 5.30 and 6.0 p.m. the brigade took up a position north of Clery Bridge to cover the withdrawal of the 116th and 118th Brigades; the enemy was then shelling the bridge and all the time the "Red Patrol" of the German Air Service, consisting of eight machines, flew over the brigade and machine-gunned it severely, casualties, however, being few. The bridge was then crossed under heavy shrapnel fire and then blown up.

South of Clery the "Division" was re-organized and the 117th Brigade took up a position south of the Somme with the 118th Brigade on its right. About 10.0 p.m. orders were received to withdraw to Feuillères.

**The Situation on
the Evening of
March 23rd, 1918.**

Thus, on the night of March 23rd, the situation, so far as the Battalions of the Regiment were concerned, was as follows:—

The remnants of the 14th Division were digging in in front of Les Riez de Cugny with the details of the Eighth Battalion attached to the 36th

Division and "D" Company with the Somerset Light Infantry of the 20th Division astride the Ham-Annois railway. The Twelfth Battalion was on the canal bank south of Voyennes, the Eleventh further north between the River d'Ingon and Bethencourt with, almost next door, the Second Battalion at Pargny.

The Third Battalion spent the night at Licourt, whilst the First Battalion, on the extreme left of the Third Army, was still able to take a more-or-less detached view of events on the right of that army—for the time the Battalion was not yet.

As to the general situation, the IIIrd, XVIIIth, and XIXth Corps of the Fifth Army were now all behind the Somme, south of where that river bends westward from near Péronne. The remaining corps, the VIIth, continued the line spasmodically to the left of the Fifth Army, where, from 6.0 p.m. on the 23rd until next morning, there was a gap of three miles between the 9th Division of that army and the 47th Division of the Vth Corps, Third Army.

March 24th, 1918. For the 14th Division, the night of March 23rd/24th was comparatively quiet. The situation was that troops of the 326th French Regiment and 41st Brigade were astride the Cugny-Ugny le Gay road about the southern exit of the former village; the remainder of the 41st Brigade and the 43rd Brigade continued the line southwards as far as the spur just south-east of La Neuville en Beine. The position of the 42nd Brigade is not mentioned and, it will be remembered, the diaries of that brigade and of the Ninth Battalion give little help.

On March 24th the Seventh Battalion details "in conjunction with the French" and owing to enemy pressure on the flanks withdrew to a position near Beines, where a hasty line was dug.

Going into somewhat greater detail the Eighth Battalion account states that at 11.0 a.m. orders were received to withdraw and reform behind the French at Grandes Beines Farm; whilst this was being carried out the French were driven back and the Eighth Battalion took up a "form of hollow square" and dug in on high ground north of Beines.

About 2.0 p.m. the Battalion was ordered to fall back and concentrate near Buchoire. There rations were sent up, but enemy aeroplanes prevented any concentration and his artillery opened with 5.9's. At this juncture the Brigadier (General Skinner) arrived and ordered concentration on Crisolles. The Battalion thereupon moved across country to Quesmy, where further trouble awaited it in the form of shells from a H.V. gun. Crisolles was reached at 7.45 p.m. and the men were able to

make themselves comfortable in some straw found near the Sucrerie. At 10.20 p.m. there was another move to La Vignette, which the Eighth Battalion reached at 3.0 a.m. on the 25th.

Of the events of the 24th Lieutenant Gould, Eighth Battalion, records that when it was clear enough to see severe casualties were inflicted upon the enemy by Vickers and Lewis-guns, provoking retaliation from trench-mortars, one of which destroyed a Vickers with its first shot. "About 11 o'clock in the morning it was observed that the enemy was breaking through towards Brouchy, and, though I did not agree with it, I conformed to the order again to retire. This retirement was carried out under a withering fire from machine-guns and I was winged in the right ankle and am now at the Base Hospital, hoping to go to 'Blighty.'"

The Seventh Battalion details, whilst digging near Beines, were ordered to Buchoire and thence to Crisolles, where they arrived at about 11.0 p.m.

The Ninth Battalion records concisely that, at 12.0 noon, it was relieved and marched to Guiscard, at 7.0 p.m. moved to Crisolles, and, at 10.0 p.m., to Sermaize, where it was billeted in the church.

The 20th Division. In the 20th Division, during the early hours of March 24th, when, once more, there was a thick mist, the enemy made several attempts to cross the bridge at Offoy but was driven back by heavy rifle and machine-gun fire from the Twelfth Battalion and the 12th Bn. 60th on the right. The flanks had withdrawn during the afternoon but it was not until 7.15 p.m. that the position was found to be most dangerous and the Battalion was ordered to withdraw to Quiquery and to take up a position there. This it did, suffering very few casualties in the process, and was then disposed with two companies along the canal bank on the right of the Voyennes-Languevoisin road and two companies on the left of the road in front of the railway.* Battalion H.Q. was established behind the railway embankment and, during the night, the Battalion dug in without interruption by the enemy.

At 7.0 a.m. the Eleventh Battalion heard rifle and machine-gun fire on its left and, later, wounded from the East Lancashire Regiment reported that the enemy had crossed the canal north of Bethencourt bridge by means of pontoons. The Battalion sent out a patrol which reported everything normal at, and south of, the bridge. At 8.0 a.m. the enemy attempted to cross the canal south of the bridge by pontoons but was frustrated.

At about 9.0 a.m. the mist lifted quickly and the enemy was seen to

* It is presumed that the situation was two companies south of the road and two companies north, the latter being between the canal and the light railway, which there runs close to the west bank of the canal.

the left rear of the Battalion ; he was driven back by machine-gun fire and, for about half an hour, all was quiet except for heavy firing on the left. At this time our own artillery was shooting short and rendering the position of the Battalion almost untenable. At 10.0 a.m. the East Lancashire Regiment was heavily attacked from the north and compelled to fall back on to the Eleventh Battalion's line.

"C" Company counter-attacked towards the village (presumably Bethencourt) but was hopelessly outnumbered and the majority failed to return.

"Meanwhile," to quote from the Battalion Diary, "the troops on our left had completely withdrawn, leaving our left flank exposed, with the result that we were attacked from the rear in force. Up to this time the canal on our front had been held intact. We were being heavily shelled by our own artillery and had a large number of casualties. The position became untenable and we withdrew to a line some one thousand yards further back." Battalion H.Q. had had a great number of casualties.

During the morning the company holding the line in front of Rouy-le-Grand was ordered by the Brigadier 59th Brigade to counter-attack and retake the positions along the canal from which the Battalion had been forced. The company advanced about seven hundred yards but was then wiped out by artillery and machine-gun fire and only a few men returned.

At 12.20 p.m. the 59th Brigade received orders from the 20th Division that, should withdrawal become necessary, the brigade should take up a position from Quiquery to Mesnil-St.-Nicaise, both inclusive. It will be observed that this line overlaps the position to which the Twelfth Battalion withdrew after dark. In fact, the situation at this time is difficult to describe from the meagre, and sometimes contradictory, accounts. It appears, however, that the 59th Brigade took up this line during the afternoon and held it throughout the night except on the extreme left when the presence of parties of the enemy about Mesnil-le-Petit necessitated a withdrawal from Mesnil-St.-Nicaise to conform.

During the night of the 24th/25th the line ran approximately from Quiquery to a point half-way between Nesle and Mesnil-le-Petit. It was held by a very scratch collection of units consisting of "elements" of two Highland battalions of the 61st Division,* the 20th Divisional Battalion consisting of details, one company of the Eleventh Battalion, the 25th Entrenching Battalion † and a "Divisional Stretcher Party."

* It may be noted here that the 61st Division was originally composed of South Midland troops. On the reduction of infantry battalions in February, 1918, the 183rd Infantry Brigade was re-constituted with three battalions from the 51st Division, viz. the 9th Bn. The Royal Scots, the 5th Bn. The Gordon Highlanders, and the 8th Bn. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. In June, 1918, on further re-organization, the three battalions were transferred to the 15th Division.

† "Military Operations, 1918," does not mention the existence of this Battalion.

There was, however, a considerable gap—at one time as great as two miles—between the left of the 20th and the right of the 8th Divisions.

The existence of gaps such as this gave point to a message received on the 24th by the 59th Brigade from above to the effect that the Germans were sending through men dressed as civilians, or as British officers, spreading panic and alarm in villages by giving orders to clear out at once. The warning was repeated on the 25th.

On the evening of the 24th in the Eleventh Battalion “A” Company had a total of one officer and about twenty-five other ranks, whilst “D” likewise had one officer; “B” and “C” Companies could not muster an officer between them.

**The Second
Battalion.**

Next to the north, shortly before dawn on the 24th,

the enemy began to bomb the posts of the Second Battalion on the canal bank about Pargny and succeeded in fording the canal to the right and left of the Battalion and to work round its flanks.

The first message received this day by the 25th Brigade was from the Second Battalion, timed 4.0 a.m. It was to the effect that two trench-mortars on the Battalion’s left company front had no ammunition and that their officer had become a casualty. The message concluded:—“They would be extremely useful in destroying remnants of bridge.”*

The situation being very precarious a withdrawal was ordered and effected in good order but with very heavy casualties. The Battalion took up the line of a sunken road five hundred yards east of Morchain, where it remained for about an hour, when it withdrew another three hundred yards to a position on the north-eastern outskirts of the village. At 12.10 p.m. the Second Battalion sent a message by runner to the 25th Brigade where it was received at 1.5 p.m. After giving the position held by the Battalion (in the sunken road) the message continues:—“We have only about 100 men and a few stragglers of the — Regiment. Ammunition very short. Germans advancing from Pargny and from north. Could artillery be brought to bear on them? Have you any instructions for us? We have only two officers left with companies.”

To this excellent message there appears to have been no reply; it was signed “G. H. G. Anderson, Captain, for Lieut.-Col. Cmdg. 2nd Bn. Rifle Brigade,” so, presumably, Colonel Peyton was still alive.

The Battalion remained in its new position until about 4.0 p.m. with no other troops in sight except the enemy massing in large numbers in the sunken road and in a hollow behind a wood about four hundred yards to the east.

* Compare “Military Operations, 1918,” p. 211, Footnote 2, on this method of completing the demolition of bridges.

Finally the Battalion was ordered to withdraw to a line of old trenches astride the Morchain-Pertain road, north of Potte, where the rest of the division had already formed up.

At 10.0 p.m. the 8th Division informed the 25th Brigade that, next morning, the latter, in conjunction with the French, the 24th Division and the 24th Brigade (8th Division) would carry out an attack in front of Licourt. What actually did, or did not, happen will be seen when the events of March 25th are recorded.

On this day the Second Battalion had very heavy casualties, which, unhappily, included its young commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel H. S. C. Peyton, M.C., who was mortally wounded and died on the day he completed a total of seven years' service.

Henry Peyton was born in 1891, second son of Sir Algernon Peyton, Bart., of Swifts House, Oxfordshire. He was educated at St. Neots, Eversley and Eton (A.A. Somerville's). From there he went to the Royal Military College, Camberley, and in 1911 was gazetted to The Rifle Brigade and later that year was posted to the Second Battalion in India. He returned on leave from India in April, 1914. At the outbreak of War he joined the Third Battalion, and sailed for France with them. Except for a short period on the staff at Gallipoli, he remained with the Third Battalion until posted to the First Battalion after the disaster of 1st July, 1916. He commanded the First Battalion for a period which included the gas attack at Ypres in August of that year, when the Battalion was on the Yser Canal. Shortly after this, he gave up command to Lieut.-Colonel Fellowes, but remained as second-in-command of this Battalion until appointed to command the Second Battalion in February, 1918.

Captain J. A. Davison writes :—

“ Henry Peyton was just that type of regular officer which the Regiment produces and of which it is justly proud. It can, indeed, be said that he loved the Regiment and its associations above all.

“ Born to the tradition of horses and hunting, he took up polo in India, and at the time of the War he had become quite a good player. When he went to France he soon became accustomed to his surroundings, and looked at life with that supreme confidence which was so much his characteristic. In the later days in France, the more appalling conditions became, the more cheerful was Henry. Indeed, he was the ideal companion at all times. His stories were ever the best that were told, and his oaths the most incongruous, and both did much to keep us cheerful. He had many unorthodox ideas, as was illustrated by the kit he wore in ‘peace time’ trench warfare.

It consisted of an old rough jacket with a web belt, old-fashioned baggy knickerbocker breeches, and stocking puttees with canvas anklets. He looked much more as if he were going out shooting than to the line. One of the points most worthy of note in connection with his service in France was his extremely happy association with his Commanding Officer in the First Battalion. He was absolutely devoted to Ronnie Fellowes, and one can remember, shocked though one was, that he never referred to him except as 'Rosie.' He commanded the Battalion with credit when called upon to do so, and many a young officer in the back areas had cause to remember a reprimand at his hands.

"He ran a first-class Mess under adverse conditions, and the most charming of our visitors always seemed to be his guests. He had friends in all parts of France, who were frequently coming to look him up.

"Apart from his happy and charming personality, there was another side to him, one that he kept much to himself. It was his great love of his home and his devoted affection to his mother, to whom he wrote every day from France."

In addition Captain S. A. Hadland, 2nd-Lieutenants R. T. Dent, G. E. Lascelles, and D. A. Gibbs were killed; Captain C. E. Pegram, M.C., and 2nd-Lieutenant B. R. Everett wounded, 2nd-Lieutenants E. F. C. Moore and T. C. Lewis wounded and missing, 2nd-Lieutenant W. H. Brann wounded (at duty), Captain W. G. Gabain missing with about three hundred other ranks killed, wounded and missing.

Finally, the Second Battalion had lost its beloved and devoted Medical Officer, Captain I. C. Maclean, D.S.O., M.C., who, returned as missing, subsequently died as a wounded prisoner-of-war.

Captain I. C. Maclean was the son of Henry John Maclean, who joined the Rifle Brigade as ensign in May, 1845, and became lieutenant-colonel in April, 1875. He was medical officer to the Second Battalion from 1915 until July 31st, 1917, when he was wounded, but rejoined the same Battalion in February, 1918.

Brig.-General Hon. R. Brand, C.M.G., D.S.O., writes as follows:—

"He was with me during my command of the Battalion from February, 1916, until wounded on July 31st, 1917, and never had a C.O. a more gallant and efficient medical officer.

"He gave everyone he came in contact with a feeling of confidence even in the most difficult of times; he never spared himself and his work in action was magnificent.

"Those who knew him are never likely to forget such times as on the night after a battle when he was to be seen wandering around either behind

or at times in front of our position searching the shell-holes for wounded with the aid of his electric torch and attended by one or two of his faithful orderlies.

" He was full of sympathy for the wounded, but at the same time would not tolerate anyone reporting sick without what he thought was due cause when the Battalion was in the line, and used at times to send a man back to duty with the remark : ' Rheumatism is an inconvenience, not a malady in war-time.'

" From a German hospital at St. Quentin he dictated a letter of farewell to me, at that time in England.

" Of all the gallant souls in the Second Battalion who met their death in the War, none stands out more clearly in my memory than that dear long civilian doctor with his pince-nez, his queer taste in uniform, and his incomparable courage—he was without fear."

Major A. E. Wass, M.C., assumed command of the Second Battalion.

The Third, Sixteenth and First Battalions. On March 24th the Third Battalion, in common with the remainder of the 17th Brigade, was ordered from Licourt to Chaulnes. Information being received that the enemy had forced the crossings of the river and was advancing on Pertain, the 17th Brigade was ordered to take up position for the defence of Chaulnes ; this it did, the Third Battalion being in brigade reserve and the C.O. being in command of Chaulnes defences.

At 8.50 p.m. Chaulnes was heavily shelled but the Third Battalion Diary ignores the fact.

The Sixteenth Battalion on the morning of the 24th took its place in the centre of the 117th Brigade, which occupied the south bank of the Somme from Buscourt to Feuillères.

Heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy during the day and during the night of the 24th/25th the bridge at Feuillères was blown up.

The First Battalion on March 24th moved up into support and was to spend the next three days " moving Head Quarters and all the companies about from place to place till the authorities could finally decide what the best dispositions were."

The Situation on the Evening of March 24th, 1918. To review once more the situation ; on the night of March 24th the Seventh Battalion details were at Crisolles, whilst the Eighth Battalion was moving thence to La Vignette and the Ninth Battalion was in the church of Sermaize.

The Eleventh Battalion, with the remainder of the 59th Brigade, was on the line Quiquery—west of Mesnil-St.-Nicaise and the Twelfth Battalion also was dug in near Quiquery.

The Second Battalion was in some old trenches north of Potte and the Third Battalion in brigade reserve near Chaulnes ; the Sixteenth Battalion was in the centre of the 117th Brigade line, which ran from Buscourt to Feuillères.

March 25th, 1918.* During the night of March 24th/25th the 14th Division was ordered to take up a position on the west side of the Noyon Canal covering the crossings at Beaurains and Haudival ; the 43rd Brigade was to be on the right, the 42nd on the left and the 41st in reserve. The canal here was dry and formed no obstacle to the passage of infantry. In accordance with these orders the details of the Seventh Battalion moved at 1.0 a.m. on March 25th to Porquéricourt, where a line was dug near that village, occupied at 10.0 a.m. and manned throughout the day.

The Eighth Battalion arrived at La Vignette about 3.30 a.m., when Major Young and his party rejoined from their detachment to the 36th Division since the 23rd. A support position was taken up "in front" (presumably east) of the Noyon-Roye road with a second line on the forward slopes of the Mont de Porquéricourt. The position is described as being most interesting as the French could be seen fighting east of the canal, near Bussy, and about Crisolles and Genvry.

The Ninth Battalion contents itself with the observation that at 7.0 a.m. it "manned canal bank defences" ; these, apparently, were between Haudival and Sermaize.

At 6.45 a.m. on the 25th the 14th Division issued the following orders.

Infantry brigades would oppose the enemy in their present positions but, when compelled to withdraw, were to take up a position on the high ground just east of Dive-le-Franc. The 41st Brigade was to cover the withdrawal, whilst the 42nd Brigade fell back to a position astride the Noyon-Evricourt road and the 43rd Brigade to one on the southern extremity of the spur just north-east of Dive-le-Franc. The 41st Brigade would then concentrate in reserve in Dive-le-Franc.

The day passed without incident until at 6.22 p.m. the 41st Brigade reported that the French were retiring on both sides of Sermaize and were now all on the west side of the canal, the enemy attack coming from the direction of Bussy.

* For the action of the French on this and subsequent days, vide "Military Operations, 1918."

Earlier in the day General Pellé, Commanding Vth French Corps,* had given provisional instructions for the withdrawal of the 14th Division from about Beaurains to Thiescourt.

Upon receipt of the 6.22 p.m. message from the 41st Brigade the 14th Division issued orders to the 42nd and 43rd Brigades to begin withdrawing to the Dive-le-Franc position covered by the 41st Brigade which began its withdrawal at 9.15 p.m.

In accordance with these orders the details of the Seventh Battalion withdrew without loss; small parties, each under an officer, concentrating at a position some five hundred yards in rear before marching back to Thiescourt where the night was spent.

The Eighth Battalion at 5.30 p.m. saw the French suddenly retire. Whilst withdrawing according to the above orders, and when within half a mile of Dive-le-Franc, the Brigadier met the Battalion and ordered it to proceed to Thiescourt. There the Eighth Battalion passed the night.

The Ninth Battalion also withdrew to Thiescourt, where the Commanding Officer—Lieut.-Colonel Hon. N. G. Bligh—rejoined the Battalion (presumably from leave), whilst a draft of fifty-eight other ranks also joined.

The 20th Division. On the 20th Division front in the early hours of the 25th the enemy attacked north of Quiquery but was driven off with heavy losses by machine-gun and rifle fire. Later the enemy opened rather a heavy bombardment on the position of the Twelfth Battalion, which suffered a considerable number of casualties from that and from our own artillery shooting short. Eventually the units on the left were compelled to fall back and, about 5.0 p.m., the Battalion received orders to move back to Réthonvillers and establish a line east of that village towards Billancourt and in rear of some French outposts. The Battalion re-organized and dug in until, at midnight, it was ordered to Roye, where the 60th Brigade was concentrated and its units sorted out. Rations were issued and the men had two or three hours' sleep.

Turning to the Eleventh Battalion, shortly after daybreak on the 25th the enemy attacked down the Mesnil-St.-Nicaise-Nesle road and drove in the front line; he then shelled the 25th Entrenching Battalion † out of its position on the west side of the Mesnil-le-Petit-Nesle road, whereupon the troops between Quiquery and the Ham-Nesle road, being attacked from the north, withdrew to a line north of Languevoisin. As a result the troops immediately south of Mesnil-St.-Nicaise and Mesnil-le-Petit withdrew to

* On March 24th all troops on the IIIrd Corps front north of the Oise—French and British—had been placed under the command of General Pellé.

† Vide footnote on p. 251.

the south of Nesle and took up a line north of Languevoisin-Billancourt-Réthonvillers. According to the Eleventh Battalion Diary "at this point French reinforcements joined the division and attempted to retake Nesle." On the other hand the 59th Brigade Diary records that, at 10.0 a.m., information was received from the 20th Division that a French division was preparing to counter-attack from Nesle and again, at 11.0 a.m., that the French counter-attack was postponed.

Be that as it may, the Eleventh Battalion claims that "in connection with the above" (counter-attack) its Lewis-gunners did some very good work, capturing three enemy machine-guns in the ravine immediately south of Nesle.

About 11.30 p.m. orders were received for all troops of the division to begin at midnight a withdrawal on Roye. This was carried out in good order and without hindrance from the enemy and in due course the 59th Brigade was assembled just north-east of Roye where sorting and re-organization took place. On withdrawal, French troops took up the main line of resistance.

The Second Battalion. The 25th Brigade, it will be recalled, was under orders on the morning of the 25th, to carry out, in conjunction with other troops including the French, a counter-attack having as its aim the recapture of the line of the Somme.

Orders for the attack were received at 3.30 a.m., but it is unnecessary to quote them here beyond mentioning the fact that zero hour would be notified later and would not, in any case, be before 8.0 a.m.

As a fact the counter-attack never took place at all * but various preliminary movements were made. The attack of the 24th Division, on the right of the 8th Division, was to be in a north-easterly direction, a course which took it almost along the front of the latter division. Consequently troops of the 8th Division had to be moved back out of the way. The contribution of the 25th Brigade could be no more than eighty of the Second Battalion under Captain F. D. R. Milne and one hundred and sixty of the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. Captain Milne and his party moved at 4.0 a.m. to Licourt, whilst the remainder of the Battalion, under Captain E. W. Cremer, occupied trenches west of Morchain. Owing to the move of troops to Licourt, and of others to clear the front of the 24th Division, there was a dangerous gap on the right and the front was only thinly held; consequently when the enemy attacked about 6.15 a.m. he before long had penetrated the line and, by about 8.0 a.m., was advancing rapidly on a wide front towards Dreslincourt and Pertain.

* Vide "Military Operations, 1918," p. 459.

The Second Battalion became scattered into about five groups, each under an officer or non-commissioned officer, and withdrew in a north-westerly direction. The events of the day cannot be better described than by quoting in full another excellent message written by Captain Anderson with a neatness and precision which would have been meritorious under the easiest and most peaceful conditions. The message runs as follows :—

“ To Headquarters, 25th Infantry Brigade.

“ Battn., together with various other units of this and other divisions, is holding the line to the Amiens-Péronne railway between Hyencourt-le-Grand and Marchelepot.

“ Battn. holds section of embankment 100 yards in length with right on Aurata Alley (exclusive). D.L.I. on right 2/R. Berks on left flank. A portion of Bn. H.Q. party is holding length of trench 100 yards in rear of this position.

“ Present strength of Battn. 4 officers, 63 O.R.

Captain F. D. R. Milne wounded 25.3.18.

2/Lt. H. M. Small „ „

2/Lt. A. A. Sutton „ „

“ Coy. detailed for attack east of Licourt took up positions east of village in conjunction with 2/R. Berks Regt. and eventually retired with them.

“ Bn. H.Q. party took up positions south of Licourt, retired when enemy scouts within 100 yards, to Rem Trench, pushed along this in S.W. Trench (direction ?) to attempt to gain touch with other units of Bde.

“ Finding Pertain occupied by enemy retired N. up Aurata Avenue. Took up position on Omiecourt-Marchelepot road and remained there till 3.0 p.m. Finally retired to railway.

“ Remainder of Battn. retired from trench W. of Morchain, when this was outflanked at Potte.

“ It is hoped rations will reach Battn. to-night, as Battn. has had practically no food to-day.

“ 25.3.18. 7.30 p.m.

(signed) G. H. G. ANDERSON,

Captain.

for Major Cmdg.

2nd. Bn. Rifle Bde.”

The remainder of the 8th Division had already concentrated at the railway and cookers and hot food were brought up to the units of the 25th Brigade.

Before closing the Second Battalion account of this day it may be mentioned that, at 11.20 a.m., the 25th Brigade received a wire from the

8th Division with the information that zero hour for the French counter-attack would be 11.0 a.m.

The Third Battalion. It was at 2.0 a.m. on the 25th that activities began in the 24th Division and 17th Brigade in preparation for the counter-attack ; its story has already been told but there was one slight difference in the 17th Brigade. Whereas the 25th Brigade heard at 11.20 a.m. that zero hour was 11.0 a.m., it was at 10.20 a.m. that the 17th Brigade heard that 10.0 a.m. was zero hour.

The Third Battalion Diary dismisses the incidents of this day in few words and no useful purpose would be served by elaborating the story of the movements of the other units of the 17th Brigade. Early in the morning the Third Battalion was ordered forward and took up positions around Omiecourt ; in the evening a retirement to Chaulnes was ordered. The Battalion re-formed behind Chaulnes into two companies and took up defensive positions in Chaulnes, from which place, according to the 17th Brigade Diary, there would be no withdrawal.

The Sixteenth Battalion. In its position in the centre of the 117th Brigade line, running from Buscourt to Feuillères, the Sixteenth Battalion did great execution on the morning of the 25th against the enemy, moving from east to west across the Battalion's front along the Clery-Hem road—one thousand yards away.

Owing to the left having given way in the direction of Maricourt the 117th Brigade was ordered to extend to the left in order to prevent the enemy crossing the Somme further west. The Battalion was now on the left of the brigade line, holding from Frise to Eclusier. The bridge at Frise was blown up but, destruction not being complete, a further charge was used later.

At about 8.0 p.m., owing to danger from the right flank, the brigade took up a line one thousand yards long southwards from the cemetery just south of Frise, the enemy then threatening Herbécourt. A patrol which crossed the river on an improvised raft found the enemy established at Curyl.*

Since 4.0 a.m. on the 25th the 39th Division had belonged to the XIXth Corps of the Fifth Army ; the VIIth Corps and its divisions north of the Somme at the same hour came under the Third Army. Henceforth the Somme was the boundary between the two armies.†

* *The Boucle de la Somme* in the area Curyl-Vaux-Frise was more a lake than a marsh with few and little-known causeways across it. When the front line ran here in 1915-16, boat and swimming patrols were frequently used.

† Vide "Military Operations, 1918," pp. 418-19 and Footnote 1 on p. 470.

The Situation on
the Evening of
March 25th, 1918.

On the night of March 25th, therefore, the position was as follows :—

The 14th Division was concentrated at Thiescourt, the Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions were, under orders, falling back to concentrate and re-organize near Roye—French troops having taken up the main line of resistance.

The Second Battalion, with the remainder of the 8th Division, was holding a line about the Péronne-Chaulnes railway, east of the latter town, with the Third Battalion holding a defensive position in Chaulnes itself. The Sixteenth Battalion on the left of the 117th Brigade, and, as a fact, of the whole Fifth Army, was holding a north and south line with its left at Frise Cemetery.*

The general situation, put very shortly, was as follows :—The French and the XVIIIth Corps had withdrawn south-westwards, thus increasing the gap between the latter and the XIXth Corps, the right of which had swung back to conform ; to the north of the Somme the right of the VIIth Corps was some miles in rear of the left of the XIXth. Consequently orders were issued to the troops to fall back to a line which included the positions occupied by the Second and Third Battalions about Chaulnes and the Sixteenth at Frise.

March 26th, 1918.

On March 26th, the infantry of the 14th Division was not called upon to fight ; as a fact it was not to be in action again until April 1st.

At Thiescourt the Seventh Battalion details received a draft of eighty other ranks ; they remained in a wood north-east of Elincourt throughout the day ready to take up a position but were not called upon. The Eighth Battalion moved at 9.0 a.m. to the high ground round L'Ecouillon (two miles south-south-west of Thiescourt) with orders to take up a position.

It was found, however, that the 61st Regiment of Chasseurs was already in position, so, the French local commander having no objection, the whole division moved back and concentrated in billets at and about Elincourt, the Ninth Battalion, which also had spent the day about L'Ecouillon, amongst the rest.

The night is described as “very comfortable,”† which may well be believed. The strengths of the three Battalions on this day were :—

* The remains of the 16th Division were holding the south bank of the Somme in rear of the 39th Division. Before the change of boundaries between armies they were facing south to protect the right of the Third Army : subsequently they were facing north to guard the left of the Fifth Army.

† The Battalions of the 14th Division had seen little comfort since the morning of March 21st.

Seventh Battalion	3 officers	80 other ranks.
Eighth ,	9 ,	215 , "
Ninth ,	10 ,	305 , "

Presumably the Seventh Battalion draft is not included.

The 20th Division. At 6.0 a.m. on March 26th the Eleventh Battalion left Roye and marched via Villers-les-Roye, Erches, and Arvillers to Quesnel, the 59th Brigade being the main body of the 20th Division, with the 60th Brigade acting as rear guard and the 61st Brigade as right flank guard on the main Amiens-Roye road.

About midday information was received from the air that the enemy was only a short distance east of Quesnel and defensive positions were taken up north-west of that village. That evening the Eleventh Battalion was in support of the 30th Division, which was holding the line east of Folies.

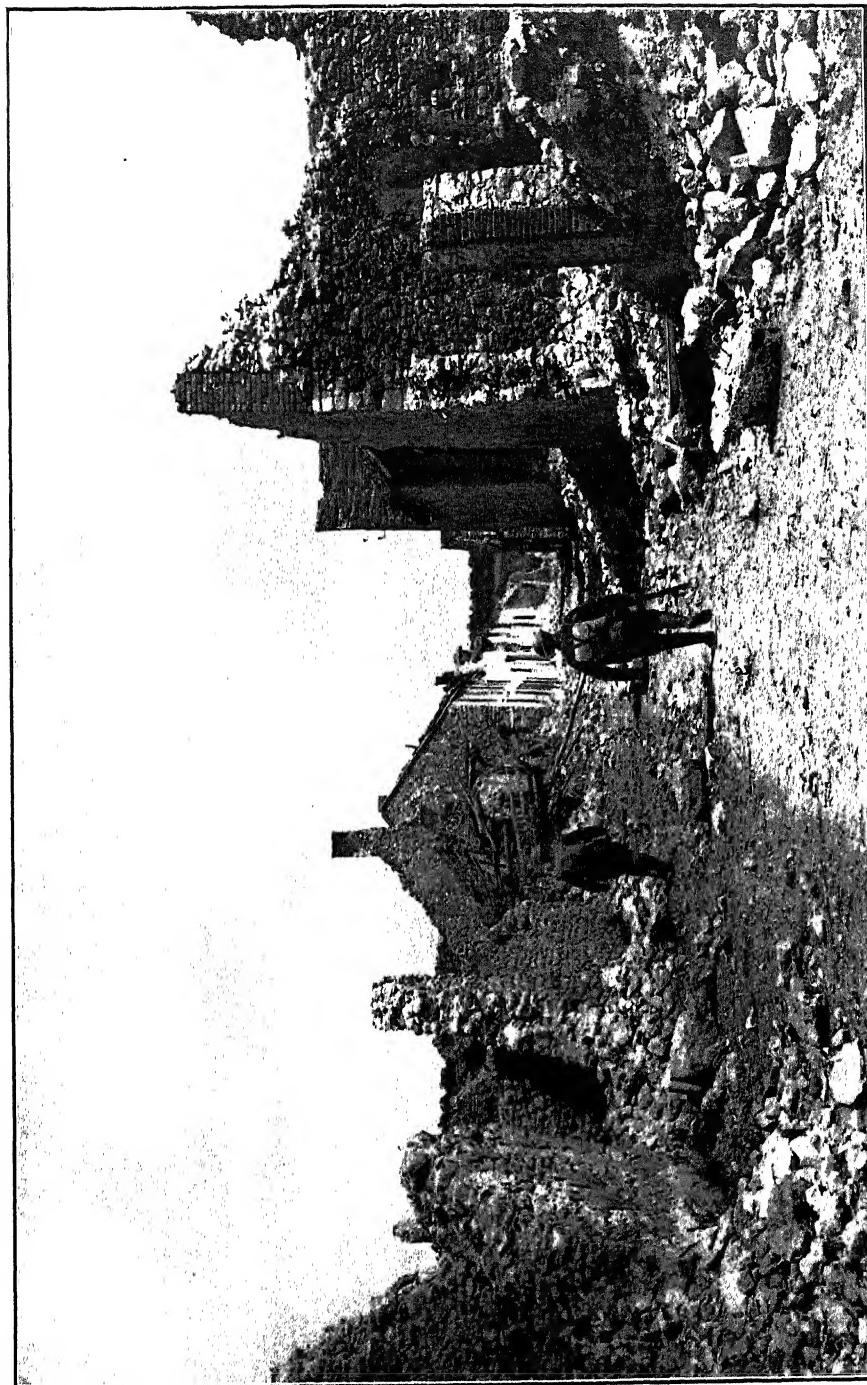
The Twelfth Battalion also arrived at Quesnel and went into billets there, a hot meal being provided for the men.

About 2.30 p.m. the Battalion moved to the Quesnel defences, where it dug in, but about 7.30 p.m. it was ordered to rejoin its brigade and march to Arvillers, where it went into billets, being in support to the 60th Brigade which was holding the Arvillers defences. The night is described as "very quiet," but so apparently had been the day, for there is no record of a shot being fired by either Battalion upon this day.

During the morning of the 26th the 25th Brigade was ordered to take up a position from Meharicourt to Lihons to cover the withdrawal of the 23rd and 24th Brigades from the line Chaulnes-Estrées to that of Vrély-Rosières.

The Second Battalion. The Second Battalion having at 2.0 a.m. moved to bivouacs west of the Meharicourt-Lihons road and south of the main railway line was moved at about noon to a position further forward in the brigade front line. Here it remained until 5.30 p.m. when, it is stated, the enemy having entered Lihons, orders were received to withdraw through the line by now occupied by the 23rd and 24th Brigades to bivouacs west of Rosières.

The Third Battalion. The Third Battalion spent the night of March 25th/26th in Chaulnes, from which place, it will be recalled, there would be no withdrawal. At 9.30 a.m. on the 26th, however, the G.S.O.3 of the 24th Division arrived at H.Q. 17th Brigade, with the information that the other two brigades of the division had withdrawn owing to there being a gap on the southern flank of the division. In consequence



A VILLAGE ON THE SOMME.

March, 1918.

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the 17th Brigade followed suit and, at 10.0 a.m., the Third Battalion received orders to withdraw through Lihons on Meharicourt. This was successfully carried out and the brigade concentrated at Vrély. The Third Battalion went into billets there and during the night was responsible for patrolling the Vrély-Warvillers road.

The Sixteenth Battalion. At 9.0 a.m. on the 26th the enemy attacked the whole line of the 39th Division and the right brigade began to fall back. Had the right been turned the Sixteenth Battalion, in its position south of Frise, would have been in a serious situation with its back to the Somme, so the 117th Brigade conformed and fell back also. A gradual withdrawal was made in successive lines towards Cappy but, on approaching that village, orders were received to hold a line facing east about Proyart.

By 4.0 p.m. this position had been reached and the 117th Brigade had dug in, the Sixteenth Battalion being in brigade support. On the right of the 117th was the 118th Brigade and on the left the 16th Division.

The Situation on the Evening of March 26th, 1918.

General Foch becomes Generalissimo.

On the night of March 26th, therefore, the Battalions of the Regiment were thus distributed. Those in the 14th Division were in and about Elincourt and, for the present, so to speak, out of the war. The Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions had also had a peaceful day and were, the former in support of the 30th Division holding the line east of Folies, the latter billeted in Arvillers and in support to its own brigade. The Second Battalion was in bivouac west of Rosières, the Third in billets in Vrély and the Sixteenth in brigade support about Proyart.

It was on this day that the Doullens Conference was held resulting in General Foch being charged with the co-ordination of the action of the Allied Armies on the Western Front.

According to General Foch's Diary * the guiding principles which he had in mind were :

1. Before everything else, the French and British troops, remaining closely in touch, must cover Amiens.
2. To this end, the troops already engaged must at all costs hold their ground.

March 27th, 1918.

On the morning of March 27th Major-General Greenly was ordered to take over command of the 2nd Cavalry Division and Major-General Sir Victor Couper resumed command of the 14th Division.

* Vide "Military Operations, 1918."

The 14th Division withdrawn into Reserve.

At midday the IIIrd Corps ordered the 14th Division (less artillery) to concentrate forthwith at Estrées-St.-Denis (eight miles west of Compiègne), where it would be in reserve and would refit.

In accordance with this order the Seventh Battalion marched to Rouvillers (two miles north-west of Estrées-St.-Denis), the Eighth Battalion to the Distillerie near the latter place, and the Ninth Battalion to Rémy (three miles east of the same place).

The 20th Division. At about 10.20 a.m. on March 27th the enemy pushed forward and occupied Bouchoir; further advance was, however, stopped by a counter-attack made by the Eleventh Battalion, whose diary for this day contents itself with this information and no more.

For the Twelfth Battalion all was quiet until 10.0 a.m. when Arvillers was shelled somewhat heavily. About this time one company was ordered to take up a position on the right of the 11th Bn. D.L.I., who were dug in near Erches. During the afternoon an enemy concentration was reported on the left of the brigade front and one company was sent to help the 6th Bn. K.S.L.I. Shortly afterwards another battalion began to fall back and two companies were sent to take its place; these soon returned, the other battalion having re-occupied its original position.

That night news was received by both Battalions that the French were relieving the 20th Division before morning.

On the morning of March 27th the fighting strength of the Second Battalion was four officers and one hundred and thirty-two other ranks.

The Second Battalion. At about 10.0 a.m. the Battalion was ordered to counter-attack through the southern outskirts of Losières with its left directed on the chimney of the sugar refinery at that place.

The Battalion went forward in artillery formation under fairly heavy shell-fire, but, on reaching the objective, found the line intact. It remained there reinforcing the 8th Bn. D.L.I. and 2nd Bn. Worcestershire Regt. in the line. Although there was confused fighting all day on the line Rosières-Harbonnières, an incredible diversity of units taking part, the Second Battalion was left where it was, having lost during the day about twenty other ranks, killed and wounded.

The Third Battalion. About 8.30 a.m. on the 27th the enemy opened a heavy bombardment on Vrély and, in accordance with orders previously received, the Third Battalion took up a position on the high

ground west of the village and dug in. There the Battalion remained, in reserve, for the remainder of the day.

The Sixteenth Battalion. According to the diary of the Sixteenth Battalion it was at 6.0 a.m. on March 27th that the enemy attacked the whole line on the left of the XIXth Corps. The division on the left fell back, leaving the flank of the 117th Brigade exposed.*

Information to this effect did not reach the 117th Brigade H.Q. until about 11.30 a.m., when orders were issued to form a defensive flank west of Proyart and to hold on as long as possible. At 12.15 p.m., however, the whole brigade was compelled to withdraw about one thousand yards to a ridge, south of Morcourt. Once more there was a withdrawal on the left and again the 117th Brigade fell back, but only for a few hundred yards ; halting and re-organizing it advanced and re-occupied the Morcourt Ridge.

Soon after this the enemy was seen to be in Morcourt, apparently having crossed the Somme, and, early in the night, was reported to be in Lamotte, on the great Amiens-Vermand highway. His presence there cut off communications with 39th Divisional H.Q. and with all supplies ; so a withdrawal in a southerly direction was suggested to the 39th Division.†

The First and Thirteenth Battalions. For the First Battalion the period of waiting and preparation was nearly over. By March 27th the Battalion, still in support, had three companies distributed in Fampoux and in a trench north of the village : "B" Company was attached to the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. up in the Rœux Chemical Works and was on the right of the brigade front.

South of the Scarpe the front line was some two thousand five hundred yards behind the Battalion caused by the evacuation of Monchy a few days previously. "It was sad to see all the ground that we had lived in and worked on during all the winter now in Boche hands."

Colonel Fellowes returned to the Battalion on the afternoon of the 27th, having been recalled off leave after two days at home.

The Thirteenth Battalion, after spending six days in front line and six in support in the Glencorse Wood sector, followed by two days in camp and another two in the line astride the Menin Road, on the night of March

* It should be borne in mind that the right of the VIIth Corps, north of the Somme, was at this time fully five miles behind the left of the 16th Division south of the river.

† On this day the 117th Brigade was re-organized as one battalion under the command of Colonel Coke.

27th/28th was relieved and, for the last time, came out of trenches in the Ypres Salient. It returned to huts in the Wippenhoek area.

The Situation on the Evening of March 27th, 1918.

So, on the night of March 27th, the Battalions of the 14th Division were in reserve west of Compiègne ; the Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions, about Folies and Erches respectively, were each hoping for, if not expecting, relief by the French before morning ; the Second Battalion was in the line east of Rosières with the Third not far away in reserve at Vrély ; the Sixteenth Battalion was on Morcourt Ridge with the enemy in Morcourt on the flank and at Lamotte in rear.

The First Battalion was in Fampoux ready for the enemy attack and the Thirteenth, upon this night, said a final farewell to the trenches of the Menin Road.

March 28th, 1918. On the morning of March 28th the 14th Division was feeling some pardonable anxiety regarding the situation in its neighbourhood. The 2nd Cavalry Division was holding a ridge some six miles to the north-west with the French on its left, but whether there were allied troops east of this none could say.

The 14th Division, therefore, ordered brigades to take precautionary measures and to hold themselves at one hour's notice to support the cavalry. These measures took the Seventh Battalion to a position outside Rouvillers and the Eighth to another on the high ground south of Gournay (four miles north of Rémy).

In the afternoon, however, the division received orders to move to the Pont St. Maxence area and, after a very disagreeable march in pouring rain, the two Battalions arrived in billets at Cinqueux (some five miles north-west of Pont St. Maxence and north of the Oise), the Ninth Battalion moving at the same time to Sarron—a suburb of the same town.

The 20th Division. At 4.0 a.m. on the 28th the French had not arrived to relieve the 59th Brigade, but things looked hopeful and before long the Eleventh Battalion was relieved by them and withdrew to Quesnel, subsequently moving thence to a wood on the Amiens-Roye road, south of Demuin. As a result of an enemy advance from the direction of Rosières and Caix the Battalion again became support to the front line, which then ran roughly from in front of Mezières to Courcelles.

The 60th Brigade was not so fortunate in its relief. Some of the 401st French Infantry Regiment arrived at 8.0 a.m. but, at 8.30, before the Twelfth Battalion had been relieved, the enemy attacked on the whole

brigade front, which, at this time, had as artillery to cover it two anti-aircraft guns. The enemy's first two assaults were repulsed by machine-gun and rifle fire, but a mixed assortment of troops of another division, holding a ridge on the right, began to fall back. "B" Company was sent up to re-occupy the position, but once more the troops on the right fell back in the direction of Hangest.

This put the 60th Brigade into a very serious position, but Captain C. W. Tait, M.C., the adjutant, realizing the situation, ordered "C" Company to swing round and open rapid fire into the flank of the advancing enemy. This enabled the Battalion to fall back on Fresnoy, which it did in artillery formation and in perfect order. The 60th Brigade concentrated and re-organized here and then marched back to Rifle Wood (two thousand yards south-west of Demuin and just south of the Amiens-Roye road), where the Twelfth Battalion had some hot food.

The brigade bivouacked in pouring rain and was now in reserve to the other two.

The 25th Brigade was relieved by troops of the 50th Division at about 2.0 a.m. on March 28th and the Second Battalion withdrew to bivouac west of Rosières.

The Second and
Third Battalions
behind the
River Avre. At about 9.0 a.m. it moved to a position one and a half miles west of Vrély until the troops in front withdrew, in accordance with orders, when the Battalion occupied a line of trenches south of Caix.

At about 3.30 p.m. the 25th Brigade received sudden orders to march to Moreuil (about seven miles as the crow flies) and to hold the bridge-head there at all costs. On arrival at Moreuil the bridge-head was found to be held by the French and the Second Battalion went into billets at Morisel on the other side of the River Avre.

About midday on the 28th, when the 8th Division on the left began to withdraw, the Third Battalion was ordered to take up a position covering the western exits from Vrély and facing north-east. The right flank then went and H.Q. Company was moved up to try and fill the gap. The line held for a short while, but soon the enemy got round the flanks and opened heavy machine-gun fire at short range. The whole line then withdrew, units becoming much intermingled in the process.

The Third Battalion re-formed on the high ground south of Caix, where it remained until an order arrived for a general withdrawal.

The Battalion first moved back to Villers and thence marched by night to Castel across the River Avre.

The Sixteenth Battalion. Early in the night of March 27th, it will be remembered, the 117th Brigade had suggested to the 39th Division a withdrawal in a southerly direction, in view of the enemy's presence at Lamotte. Acquiescing in this suggestion the 39th Division issued orders for a withdrawal to Cayeux, where fresh orders would be issued.

The Sixteenth Battalion, accordingly, in company with the remainder of the 117th Brigade, withdrew at 7.0 a.m. on March 28th through Harbonnières on Cayeux, being heavily and accurately shelled during the process. The brigade then took up a position south-west of Wiencourt with the 118th Brigade on the right.

Soon after dark the enemy made a demonstration which was not permitted to develop into anything more serious, the brigade taking three prisoners from two different infantry regiments and an artillery regiment.

About 9.0 p.m. a message was received from the 39th Division to the effect that, if further withdrawal became necessary, the brigade would assemble five hundred yards in rear of the Aubercourt-Marcelcave line.

About 10.30 p.m. the 118th Brigade reported that the division on its right had gone and that it was following suit, so the 117th Brigade did likewise and took up a position east of the road, linking the two last-mentioned villages.

The First Battalion. On March 28th the German attack reached the extreme left of the Third Army front, north of the River Fampoux. Scarpe, where was the 4th Division. The bombardment began at 3.0 a.m. and the attack was delivered at about 7.20 a.m.

On the left the enemy made some progress on the front of the 12th Brigade and this caused the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt.—to which was attached "B" Company of the First Battalion—to fall back gradually to the reserve line, where a magnificent stand completely hung up the attack for the remainder of the day.

"B" Company, being under heavy shell-fire all the day, lost Lieutenant L. Stratford killed and about fifty other casualties.

The enemy's method of attack did not show the same dash as it had earlier in the south, but inclined to follow the course of communication trenches, rather than come "over the top." On the immediate right the 2nd Bn. Seaforth Highlanders of the 10th Brigade beat off all attacks and only withdrew late in the afternoon from the Mount Pleasant Wood promontory (north of the Scarpe and just west of Rœux), as it was in danger of being cut off owing to the more rapid progress of the attack south of the river. On this occurring two platoons of "I" Company were sent

to form a defensive flank along the railway and on the right of "B" Company.

In the afternoon "I" Company was sent up to fill a gap between the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. and the 2nd Bn. Lancashire Fusiliers ; it found the trench occupied by the enemy, but whilst these two battalions bombed along the trench, one from the south and the other from the north, two platoons of "I" Company counter-attacked over the open and ejected the enemy.

"There is," says the First Battalion account, "no doubt about it that the Boche took a very nasty knock on this day and his casualties were enormous from our machine-gun and rifle fire ; though he gained a little ground, most of which we voluntarily evacuated, his main plan completely failed and he took some time to recover from it."

**The Situation on
the Evening of
March 28th, 1918.**

**The Fifth Army
becomes the
Fourth.**

The evening of March 28th, the eighth day of the battle, found the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Battalions in the Pont St. Maxence area on the Oise ; the Eleventh Battalion in support to the front line, south of the River Luce, between Mezières and Courcelles, with the Twelfth in Rifle Wood, the 60th Brigade being in divisional reserve.

The Second Battalion was in billets at Morisel, just west of Moreuil, with the Third in Castel, another mile and a half down the Avre ; the Sixteenth Battalion was in position north of the Luce, between Aubercourt and Marcelcave. Finally the First Battalion, much to the disappointment of the enemy, was still about Fampoux, north of the Scarpe.

On this day General Sir Henry Rawlinson succeeded General Sir Hubert Gough and the Fifth Army became the Fourth.

March 29th, 1918.

On March 29th the 14th Division received sudden orders to embus at Nogent-sur-Oise ; owing to congestion on the roads the buses did not arrive until 9.0 p.m. instead of the expected twelve noon. Between then and 11.0 p.m. the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Battalions embussed and spent the remainder of the night on the road.

At 4.35 a.m. on the 29th the 20th Division issued orders giving the general line to be held that day by the XIXth Corps, the sector allotted to the division being from Mezières to Demuin, exclusive. The 59th Brigade was to be responsible for Mezières village and the Amiens-Roye road with the 61st Brigade on its left and the 24th Division on its right with the rôle of protecting that flank.

"As far as at present known," continued the order, "French still hold a line in front of the division."

The Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions.
Counter-attack on Mezières.

On this morning the approximate "fighting strength" of the Eleventh Battalion was one hundred and seventy, all ranks.

The defences of Mezières proved on reconnaissance to be "pretty strong," but on the left of the 59th Brigade, where there were a few French troops, the line of resistance was very thin.

At about 11.0 a.m. enemy scouts were seen coming towards Mezières but, being fired on from all sides, they made off in a north-easterly direction. By 1.0 p.m., however, the enemy had succeeded in turning both flanks and Mezières was, perforce, evacuated. By this time the 60th Brigade had been moved up to form a defensive flank on the right but was met by heavy machine-gun fire from that quarter.

At 2.15 p.m. the 20th Division ordered the 59th and 60th Brigades to recapture Mezières. The 60th Brigade was in support to the 59th, having been moved up, as already seen, at about 11.0 a.m., the Twelfth Battalion being now in a wood just north of Villers-aux-Erables.

The counter-attack took place at 4.0 p.m., the Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions being in the centre of the four battalions employed in front line. The two battalions on the left met with far stronger opposition than the two on the right. The diary of the Eleventh Battalion merely records that it took part in a counter-attack which inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy but failed to retake the village, chiefly on account of "preponderance" of heavy artillery on the part of the enemy. The 60th Brigade, in this connection, says that the promised artillery support to the counter-attack was entirely absent.

In the Twelfth Battalion sector, on the other hand, the attack was, at first, entirely successful, the whole village being entirely cleared by 4.30 p.m., seven machine-guns and two trench-mortars damaged, and a number of enemy dead found.

Unfortunately the enemy was found to be massed at the far end of the village (prisoners said that he had intended to attack at the same zero hour) and that fact, added to the weakness of the flanks, necessitated a withdrawal. The two Battalions then took up a position along the Moreuil-Demuin road, the 59th Brigade having its left on the Amiens-Roye road with the 60th Brigade on its right.

That night the "fighting strength" of the Eleventh Battalion was six

officers and forty other ranks. During the afternoon Major Chadwick, M.C., officer commanding the Twelfth Battalion, was wounded in Mezières and command devolved upon the adjutant, Captain C. W. Tait, M.C.

At 2.0 a.m. the 25th Brigade received sudden orders to move to Jumel, some five miles west of Moreuil. The rest of the brigade appears to have carried out this move, but there is no trace of the order to do so being sent to the Second Battalion.

The Second and
Third Battalions
about Moreuil
and Castel. In any case the diary records contentedly that the Battalion remained in billets at Morisel until 2.0 p.m. By this hour the remainder of the brigade had been recalled from Jumel and was on its way back and the Battalion was ordered to take up a position in the southern corner of the large wood north-east of Moreuil,* the remaining battalions of the brigade to follow on return from their walk. Here it was fairly heavily shelled, while, at about 5.0 p.m., the French began to withdraw south-west through Moreuil.

About 10.0 p.m. the Second Battalion was dug in three hundred yards north of the wood and facing south. The Battalion was now on the right of the XIXth Corps.

The diary of the Third Battalion records that "the period from March 29th/31st was spent marching to and fro between Castel-Dommartin-Hailles-Thezy-Fouencamps without coming in close contact with the enemy." As a fact the Battalion did march to the second-named place (to the west on the River Noye) on the 29th and by the evening was billeted with the rest of the 17th Brigade in Hailles. At the same time, 7.50 p.m., the French reported that the enemy was in possession of Moreuil and that the French 32nd Infantry Regiment was withdrawing from Castel to Hailles.

The Sixteenth
Battalion. For the Sixteenth Battalion, March 29th was an
uneventful day.

About 8.0 p.m. the 117th Brigade was ordered to concentrate on a line some twelve hundred yards west of Marcelcave; reconnaissance showing this line to be quite unsuitable for concealing or covering troops by daylight units of the brigade were ordered to assemble in a wood another one thousand yards further west and, during the night, they moved to this position.

* Subsequently known as "Cavalry Wood."

During the afternoon the enemy had been observed massing about Ignaucourt.

**The Thirteenth
Battalion
moves South.**

In the early hours of March 29th the Thirteenth Battalion entrained at Hopoutre siding, near Poperinghe, and, leaving the Ypres Salient for ever, started on its journey south. As that journey was not to take the Battalion directly into the heavy fighting of either the Fourth or Third Armies, it may well, for the present, be left where it is.

In the 4th Division, during the night of March 28th/29th, a withdrawal was ordered by the 11th Brigade in order to conform with the positions of

**The First
Battalion.
The German
Attack on
Arras fails.**

the troops on the flanks and the First Battalion became front-line battalion holding a two thousand yards front extending north of and through Fampoux and along the Scarpe from that place westwards. This move was completed by about 3.0 a.m. on the 29th—Good Friday.

At 6.0 a.m. a party of the enemy penetrated our line at the junction of "A" and "B" Companies and began bombing along the trench. The following account of what happened is taken partly from the Battalion account and partly from details supplied by Captain J. A. Davison, M.C., who was still Colonel Fellowes' adjutant.

"In the Battalion H.Q. dug-out, in addition to the Battalion staff, were Captain A. M. Craigmile, M.C., commanding the support Company ('I') and an officer of the 1st Bn. Somerset Light Infantry, believed to have been Captain E. W. Marshall, M.C.

"I was called to the telephone," says Captain Davison, "to speak to Etheridge, who was in a ruined dug-out in the forward trench some fifty yards in advance of our trench and his dug-out had a ramp, as opposed to steps having been constructed, I think, as a trench-mortar and ammunition store. He appeared to be a bit bothered and said that a German officer had just called down to know if anyone were there; the conversation continued to the effect that a German machine-gun was at that moment in action in the trench on top. The line then went 'diss' * and, to the best of my recollection, that was more or less the end of Etheridge and his company." As a fact, Lieutenant C. N. Etheridge was killed and the only other officer of the company, 2nd-Lieutenant T. K. Davey, was mortally wounded.

"On hearing this news Colonel Fellowes turned to Craigmile and said he must counter-attack at once, sending half his company up each of the

* Signallers' slang for dis-connected.

two communication trenches which led to the forward trench. . . . With a cheerful smile old Craigmire got up and went off."

Captain Craigmire was killed almost immediately. Captain Marshall, who had not been called upon to take part in this counter-attack, volunteered his services in co-operation and proposed to counter-attack "over the top." Captain Marshall at once shared the fate of Captain Craigmire, but the diversion had had its effect, for the remains of the two companies, assisted by some men collected by Lieutenant G. J. Cole, effected an entry into the trench and drove out the enemy.

Two machine-guns were captured entirely through the action of A/Corporal Bridgewater and Rifleman Relf of "A" Company who, with great gallantry, attacked the enemy and prevented him extending his gains. When their supply of bombs ran out they went back for more and, returning to the attack, finally drove the enemy out and took the two guns. For this action both were awarded the Military Medal, as also were Serjeant Utting and Rifleman Elliott of "B" Company. Lieutenant Cole was awarded the Military Cross.

Thus ended, in failure, the great enemy attack on Arras.

The G.O.C. 4th Division sent a telegram of warm congratulation to all units of the division—a tribute which appears to have been well earned.

Once more stock must be taken of the Battalions of the Regiment at the close of March 29th.

The Situation on the Evening of March 29th, 1918. The Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Battalions were in buses moving from Nogent in the French area and bound, as will be seen, for Hébécourt, about five miles south of Amiens : the Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions were in position along the Moreuil-Demuin road, south of the Amiens-Roye road, with the Second Battalion on their right and on the right of the XIXth Corps front dug in north of Cavalry Wood ; the Third Battalion was not far off in billets in Hailles.

The Sixteenth Battalion was in a wood some two thousand yards west of Marcelcave. The Thirteenth Battalion was in the train moving south from Ypres and the First Battalion was still in and about Fampoux.

March 30th, 1918. In the early hours of March 30th the Seventh and Eighth Battalions de-bussed at Hébécourt and marched to billets in Bacouel and Vers, respectively, where they spent the night ; the Ninth Battalion de-bussed at Tilloy-les-Conty, some five miles further south, and went into billets there.

The 20th Division. In the 20th Division there were considerable fluctuations on March 30th.

Counter-attack on Little Wood. During the morning the Twelfth Battalion reported that an enemy attack had penetrated Cavalry Wood on its right and that it was, in consequence, falling back. Information was received, however, from the 60th Brigade that the 2nd Cavalry Division, supported by the 8th Division, was going forward to clear up the situation and the Twelfth Battalion returned and occupied the eastern edge of Rifle Wood, to which line the Eleventh Battalion had already withdrawn from the Moreuil-Demuin road position. During the afternoon the enemy occupied Little Wood (south-east of Rifle Wood) and sent forward scouts to Rifle Wood. A counter-attack was then arranged with the object of retaking Little Wood and the original line of the morning. An artillery bombardment was arranged for and the 59th and 60th Brigades, in conjunction with some French troops, were to carry out the attack at 7.0 p.m. The bombardment was very successful as was also the result of the counter-attack which re-took Little Wood with some fifty prisoners and nine machine-guns and re-established the Moreuil-Demuin line.

For this action warm congratulations were received from the Corps and Divisional Commanders. During the afternoon Captain C. W. Tait, M.C., was wounded, and Lieutenant E. J. Barrett assumed command. Thereafter the night was quiet.

The Second Battalion. During the night of March 29th/30th General Coffin, Commanding 25th Brigade, found that the H.Q. and two battalions of the French regiment which had been at Villers-aux-Erables were now north-west of Cavalry Wood and the regimental commander told him that he intended to move over the bridge at Castel to the left bank of the Avre. After a personal consultation with the G.O.C. 20th Division at Domart it was decided to move the 25th Brigade to Castel, and if necessary to hold a bridge-head there. The brigade, including the Second Battalion, thereupon moved off before 5.0 a.m. but, on arrival at Castel at about 6.30 a.m., it was found that there were already sufficient French troops there, so a further move was made to the neighbourhood of Rouvrel. There the troops were fed and rested and, about 6.0 p.m., the Second Battalion marched to Castel, coming under heavy shell-fire on the way, and took up a position east of the river to protect the bridge-head. The 25th Brigade was in support to the 23rd and 24th Brigades, which were supposed to be relieving the 24th Division. On this day the Second Battalion had about twenty other ranks killed and wounded.

The Third Battalion spent an uneventful day on March 30th. There were rumours during the day that the above-mentioned relief would take place and that the 24th Division would concentrate at Cottency, across the Noye. Actually the 17th Brigade spent the day in position about the wood, one and a half miles west of Hailles, and, in the afternoon, returned to billets in that village.

By 6.0 a.m. the 17th Brigade was in position two thousand yards west of Marcelcave with what is sometimes known as Carey's Force,* holding the Aubercourt-Marcelcave position and the 61st Division on its left. About

The Sixteenth Battalion. Out of the Battle. 7.0 a.m. the enemy attacked Aubercourt and at the same time troops on the right, south of the River Luce, fell back. The Sixteenth Battalion, with the remainder of the 17th Brigade, at first stood firm but eventually had to fall back. What happened during this day it is difficult to say. The 17th Brigade appears to have advanced part of the way, towards its original position, then fallen back again and then advanced once more, the enemy offering little opposition. It is probable that by this time the infantry on both sides was so completely exhausted that the men could hardly move.

Eventually, at about 2.0 p.m., cavalry reinforcements arrived near the wood which had been the brigade's original position, and, later, two battalions of Australians, appearing from the north, advanced and passed through the 17th Brigade moving on the Aubercourt-Marcelcave line.

The 17th Brigade was then collected north of the wood; its total strength was now about ninety all ranks, organized, it will be remembered, as one battalion.

For the Sixteenth Battalion the battle was over.

The First Battalion. March 30th is described by the First Battalion as "comparatively uneventful except for some very heavy shelling all round the support company and Battalion H.Q." It was quiet in the front line except for snipers and machine-guns. "We had all our work cut out re-organizing the new line, establishing bombing-blocks and sending out patrols to locate the enemy. Down in Fampoux it was rather like a game of hide-and-seek among the ruins. No one quite knew where the other side was and one had to creep and crawl and skip and jump about to avoid being spotted and sniped at."

As this life continued for the next two days the First Battalion will be left for the present and a return made to the south.

* Vide "Military Operations, 1918," p. 507.

**The Situation on
the Evening of
March 30th, 1918.**

For the moment, on the night of March 30th, the three Battalions in the 14th Division were in billets south of Amiens ; the Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions were once more on the Moreuil-Demuin line : the Second Battalion was guarding the bridge-head at Castel on the Avre with the Third in billets at Hailles. The Sixteenth Battalion was south of Villers-Bretonneux and was to come out of the battle that night.

March 31st, 1918.

The Seventh Battalion spent March 31st at Bacouel and received a draft of seven officers and three hundred and thirty other ranks from No. 14 Entrenching Battalion (K.O.Y.L.I.).

Since March 23rd casualties had been five other ranks killed, one officer and seventeen other ranks wounded.

The Eighth Battalion also remained in its billets at Vers, receiving three officers and one hundred and thirty other ranks from the 7th Bn. K.O.Y.L.I.

The 14th Division.

Casualties for the period March 21st-31st had been sixteen officers and three hundred and fifty-four other ranks.

Sir Victor Couper vacates command. The Ninth Battalion remained at Tilloy-les-Conty, receiving twelve officers and one hundred and thirty other ranks from the 13th Entrenching Battalion.

On this day Brig.-General P. C. B. Skinner, C.M.G., D.S.O., assumed command of the 14th Division vice-Major-General Sir Victor Couper, K.C.B., who left to take over the command of a division in England. Sir Victor had brought the 14th Division to France in May, 1915, and it had known no other commander, except for the few days in March, 1918, when General Greenly had exercised temporary command.

On leaving the division Sir Victor published the following Farewell Order dated March 31st, 1918.

" On relinquishing the command of the 14th (Light) Division to assume command of a Division in England, Major-General Sir Victor Couper, K.C.B., wishes to express to all ranks in the Division his appreciation of their performance during the recent operations, which he considers to rank amongst the finest work the Division has ever done.

" Sir Victor Couper says 'Good-bye' to the Division with deep regret ; he thanks all ranks for their constant support and gallant behaviour in the past, and wishes the Division all good luck and success in the future."

For the Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions the morning of March 31st was quiet.

But soon after noon a heavy hostile barrage was put down along the 20th Division front and that of the 8th Division on its right. An infantry attack followed and first the 8th Division and then the 20th were forced to withdraw, the Eleventh Battalion falling back across the Luce and taking up a position between Domart and Hangard. This movement took place under fairly heavy machine-gun fire, but without much loss.

The Twelfth Battalion likewise withdrew to the bridge-head at Thennes.

During the afternoon a cavalry brigade came up to reinforce and took up a position on the ridge west of Cavalry Wood with two battalions of the 60th Brigade.

During the night Lieutenant E. J. Barrett was wounded and command of the Twelfth Battalion devolved upon 2nd-Lieutenant H. G. S. Lorimer.

At about 2.0 p.m. on March 31st news reached H.Q. 25th Brigade, in divisional reserve to the 8th Division, that the line had been broken between Cavalry and Rifle Woods and the brigade was ordered to counter-attack.

This the 25th Brigade did, and with success, but the Second Battalion was not employed and remained throughout the day guarding the Castel bridge-head.

During the morning of the 31st the enemy shelled Hailles; otherwise the Third Battalion did not come into contact with the enemy and in the afternoon moved to Fouencamps.

The Third Battalion also was now, to all intents and purposes, out of the battle so far as active fighting went.

The Sixteenth Battalion at 2.0 a.m. on the 31st, with the remainder of the 117th Brigade, marched to billets in Longueau and, that afternoon, moved by 'bus to Bovelles (seven miles west of Amiens), where the brigade—such as it was—resumed its normal organization.

Casualties in the Battalion since March 21st were three officers and twelve other ranks killed, fourteen officers and one hundred and forty-one other ranks wounded, seven officers and two hundred and ninety-three other ranks missing: a total for the ten days of twenty-four officers and four hundred and forty-six other ranks.

The Situation on
the Evening of
March 31st, 1918.

The end of March found the Battalions in the 14th Division still in billets south of Amiens; the Eleventh Battalion in position between Domart and Hangard with the Twelfth at the bridge-head of Thennes and the Second at that of

Castel. The Third and Sixteenth Battalions were out of the battle and were, respectively, in billets in Fouencamps and Bovelles.

April 1st, 1918. On the morning of April 1st the 41st Brigade moved by 'bus to St. Nicholas, just east of Boves, and, with the remainder of the 14th Division, spent the day in reserve south of the Bois de Gentelles. At 8.0 p.m. it relieved General Seely's cavalry detachment in the Domart sector and occupied the line with the Eighth Battalion on the right, the Seventh on the left and the 8th Bn. 60th in reserve. The 42nd Brigade with the Ninth Battalion also de-bussed at St. Nicholas and remained in divisional reserve.

The 14th Division back in the Line.

Neither the Eleventh nor the Twelfth Battalions were seriously engaged upon the 1st; and that night, under cover of the 14th Division, which, as has just been seen, was relieving the cavalry, the 20th Division was withdrawn from the line and, after collecting north-west of Domart, embussed near Boves for Queruavillers (ten miles south-west of Amiens), which was reached early on the morning of the 2nd. The 20th Division (less artillery) was now out of the battle.

The 20th Division. Out of the Battle.

In the Eleventh Battalion it is remarkable that of the twenty-three officer casualties sustained none were killed and one only, 2nd-Lieutenant G. Davidson, was missing. Lieut.-Colonels A. E. Cotton, D.S.O., and M. Morgan-Owen, D.S.O., Major C. P. Warren, Captains F. H. Norris, Pearson, T. J. B. Bosvile and J. Crawford, D.S.O., Lieutenant R. Singleton, 2nd-Lieutenants W. R. Hudson, D. MacGregor, K. V. Roskruge, F. M. Johnson, J. H. Johnson, S. Knight, S. Carson, H. Hogg, G. B. Everest, J. R. Napier, M.C., M.M., W. A. MacLeod, H. L. Williamson, R. Syme and N. C. East were wounded, whilst there were four hundred and eighteen casualties to other ranks.

Major Hon. A. M. Bertie, D.S.O., M.C., was now in command.

Of the twenty-one officer casualties in the Twelfth Battalion, Lieut.-Colonel A. F. C. MacLachlan, D.S.O., and 2nd-Lieutenants C. M. Clive-Smith and F. J. S. Fergusson, were killed; 2nd-Lieutenant F. W. Bloore wounded and missing (believed killed), Major F. Chadwick, M.C., Captains T. E. Holland, C. W. Tait, M.C., F. Billington, Lieutenants F. J. Lockwood-Wingate, B. J. Barrett, N. J. Andrew, 2nd-Lieutenants A. A. Fryett, J. R. Fallon, D. M. Mitchell, N. Dewar, A. J. Betts, E. Relf, D. C. McKean and J. Wilson wounded; whilst 2nd-Lieutenants G. L. Rumble and D. H. de Pass were wounded and missing. Of other ranks forty were killed,

two hundred and sixty-one wounded and one hundred and thirty-six missing.

The 20th Division took with it the congratulations of the Commander of the XIXth Corps, and the Commander of the XVIIIth included the following in his report on the battle:—

“Throughout the 23rd March and until the afternoon of the 24th the 20th Division not only held their new line but also counter-attacked with the 60th Brigade to restore the situation south of Ham. The 12th Bn. K.R.R.C. particularly distinguished themselves on this date, as did also the 11th Bn. of the Rifle Brigade at Bethencourt in the area of an adjoining corps.”

The Second Battalion. Withdraws to rest. At about 10.0 a.m. on April 1st the Second Battalion moved into position five hundred yards south of Thennes in readiness to counter-attack. On this day the 2nd Cavalry Division counter-attacked successfully on the left of the 8th Division, but the services of the Second Battalion were not called upon and it remained where it was all day. At dusk it was relieved by the 3rd Cavalry Brigade and, in the early hours of April 2nd, on relief by a company of the 133rd French Regiment, the Battalion marched to billets in Cottency. At 2.0 p.m. it marched to Sains-en-Amienois and thence went by 'bus to billets at Le Mesge (two miles south of Hangest-sur-Somme).

As will be seen later, the Second Battalion had by no means finished with the battle, but it was, at any rate, now to have a respite of over three weeks.

Casualties in the Battalion had amounted to six officers and thirty-two other ranks killed; eleven officers and one hundred and five other ranks wounded, with two officers and three hundred other ranks missing.

On April 1st the First Battalion was relieved and went back into reserve about Athies. Though not comfortable it was fairly quiet and the nights were spent digging. Since March 28th casualties had been four officers killed (2nd-Lieutenant A. V. Gray had been shot through the head by a sniper on the 31st), one died of wounds, and about one hundred and fifty other ranks.

The Situation on the Evening of April 1st, 1918.

On the night of April 1st the 14th Division was in the line in the Domart sector and the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Battalions were the only three remaining in the battle of the eight which had been engaged in the southern area.

April 2nd-4th,
1918.

On the night of April 2nd the 14th Division was relieved by the French and concentrated in the Bois de Blangy.

On the 3rd the division took over the line from the Amiens-Villers-Bretonneux road (exclusive), just west of Warfusée Abancourt to the Somme.

The 41st Brigade was on the right, the 42nd on the left and the 43rd in reserve. The point of junction of brigades in the line was about one thousand yards south-east of Hamel.

The 41st Brigade, command of which was assumed this day by Brig.-General C. R. P. Winser, D.S.O., relieved part of the 1st Cavalry Division; the relief did not go very smoothly as there was trouble over guides, but eventually the brigade was in position with the Eighth Battalion on the right, the Seventh on the left and the 8th Bn. 60th in reserve. Unfortunately eight machine-guns of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade were withdrawn during the night without notice and without replacement.

In the 42nd Brigade the Ninth Battalion was on the left relieving the 16th Division.

The relief by the 41st Brigade was officially completed at 4.0 a.m. on April 4th, but the Battalions had hardly settled in when an enemy bombardment opened at 5.20 a.m. The Eighth Battalion was disposed with "B," "C," and "D" Companies in front line and "A" Company in close support in the Bois d'Accroches; Battalion H.Q. was in a quarry at the junction of the Warfusée-Fouilloy and Hamel-Marcelcave roads.

The enemy attacked at about 6.30 a.m., in rain and mist, and eventually penetrated the position as far as Battalion H.Q. in the quarry. There, a stand was made for about one and a half hours, a line being established about two hundred yards in rear of the quarry.

In the Seventh Battalion, although from the fire on the right flank it was apparent that the enemy had broken through, the line remained intact until 9.30 a.m., when the situation on the right necessitated a withdrawal to a line five hundred yards in rear; after suffering heavy casualties from the enemy bombardment a further withdrawal became necessary.

Thereafter the remains of both Battalions appear to have become split up into small parties and the accounts of the remainder of the day's events are confusing and contradictory.

In any event, by evening the remnants of the 41st Brigade had been collected in Aubigny and were put into the Army Reserve Line, south of that place.

Meanwhile, in the Ninth Battalion, "C" Company on the right lost thirty to forty men from the bombardment, and, the battalion on the right

being forced back and the enemy being on the high ground to the right rear, the Battalion withdrew to a line east of Vaire, where it filled the gap between the 5th Australian and 3rd Cavalry Divisions.

In the case of the Ninth Battalion also subsequent events are difficult to follow, but the 42nd Brigade appears to have been relieved that night by the 3rd Cavalry Division and then moved back to join the 41st at Aubigny.

Disaster had this day befallen H.Q. of the 42nd Brigade. In its H.Q., only five hundred yards behind the front line, the German infantry arrived before any news of an attack came from the battalions and the Brigadier, staff-captain, signalling officer and fifteen other ranks were captured.* The brigade-major hid in a ditch, two hundred yards away, and escaped that night through the enemy outpost line.

The End of the
Somme Retreat.
April 4th, 1918.

So finished April 4th, the date upon which Ludendorff says that the Somme Retreat ended.

For the Battalions of the Rifle Brigade involved in that battle this date does mark the close, but before leaving them it may be convenient to see them as far as the various rest-areas to which, none too soon, they were sent.

To continue the story of the 14th Division. Early on the morning of April 5th the 41st and 42nd Brigades occupied the line of rifle-pits known as the Army Reserve Line which ran west of Aubigny from west of Villers-Bretonneux to just east of Daours. On this day the two brigades were amalgamated, under General Winser; the 41st Brigade details being known as No. 1 Battalion under Lieut.-Colonel B. J. Curling and the 42nd as No. 2, under Colonel Bligh.

Work was continued on this line until the evening of April 7th, when the 30th Australian Battalion took over the line and the 14th Division concentrated at St. Fuscien—south of Amiens.

Casualties in the Seventh Battalion during April were twenty-one other ranks killed, six officers and eighty-four other ranks wounded (of whom Major N. S. Thornton subsequently died), and sixty-seven other ranks missing.

In the Eighth Battalion, since March 21st, losses had been Lieutenant F. A. Kingswell, 2nd-Lieutenants W. L. Fairweather, R. M. Dickson, W. N. Sproston, M.C., A. R. Gray and thirty-one other ranks killed; Captain C. R. Gorell-Barnes, D.S.O., M.C., died of wounds; Captains C. E. Squire, M.C., W. A. Teakle, M.C., Lieutenant J. A. Gould, M.C., 2nd-Lieutenants H. S. Bowyer, J. D. Davidson, M.C., W. G. F. Dewar, D. F. Hampson, H. Clayton,

* As a fact, it was learned later that the Brigadier, General G. N. B. Foster, was killed on this day.

C. L. Emy and two hundred and fifty-seven other ranks wounded : Captain and Adjutant A. F. Newell, 2nd-Lieutenants J. F. Smith, F. W. Richards and thirty-six other ranks were wounded and missing, whilst Captain W. A. Crebbin, M.C., Lieutenant E. A. F. Batty, 2nd-Lieutenants M. McC. Martin, A. W. McCrorie, E. P. Blundell and three hundred and twenty-seven other ranks were missing ; making a total of six hundred and seventy-four all ranks.

In the Ninth Battalion casualties on April 4th had been four officers (attached) and one hundred and ninety-seven other ranks. Captain Forbes, R.A.M.C., also was missing.

On April 2nd the Eleventh Battalion marched to Selincourt and the Twelfth to Revelles, west-south-west and west of Amiens, and much-needed re-organization was taken in hand.

The Second Battalion has already been seen as far as Le Mesge, but the Third, although out of the active fighting, was not quite out of the battle area. This Battalion, last heard of on March 31st at Fouencamps, remained there until April 3rd, when it moved to billets in Boves. The billets were comfortable, Battalion H.Q. was in a good house and the Battalion String Band performed during dinner. A fair percentage of the men were given a hot bath.

"April 4th," says Colonel Kewley in his account, "started stormily, the enemy being very unpleasant with a H.V. gun which caused eleven casualties during the morning ; moreover, orders had been received to move out into the open, and as rain was descending in sheets this was somewhat depressing." At 11.0 a.m. the Battalion moved to just north of the Bois de Gentelles, where it spent "a very miserable thirty-six hours—to all appearances doing no good to anyone." The majority of all ranks were without greatcoats or waterproof sheets and there was no cover of any sort. Late on the 5th the Battalion moved by route march and 'bus to Saleux, whence, after a night in billets, it entrained for St. Valery-sur-Somme, where it spent the night in the Third Army Rest Camp, being "extremely well done" by the Y.M.C.A.

On April 7th the Third Battalion marched to Cayeux-sur-Mer, just south of the estuary of the Somme, where it went into billets, "and proceeded to forget about the War." The Battalion had been in the devastated area, and therefore outside civilization, since it marched up from Cremarest in July, 1917, to take part in the opening attack of the Third Battle of Ypres.

Colonel Kewley's account ends with the following note :—"The position at Vrély was an impossible one and it is a marvel that anyone ever got away

from it. The enemy at this moment seemed slow to follow up his advantage. A point of interest was the fact that the Second and Third Battalions met on the field of battle, men of each Battalion at times fighting with the other Battalion."

Casualties between March 21st and April 5th had been : killed, seven officers and thirty-four other ranks ; wounded, eleven officers and two hundred and forty-six other ranks ; wounded and missing, one officer and fourteen other ranks ; missing, four officers and one hundred and sixteen other ranks.

From March 31st to April 7th the Sixteenth Battalion marched from Bovelles west and north by stages to Maisnières, south-west of Abbeville. Thence, on April 9th, it was moved by train from Woincourt to St. Omer, whence it marched to Houlle.

The First Battalion from reserve near Athies moved up on April 5th into support in some very exposed and badly knocked about trenches. On the 7th the Battalion was partially and, on the 8th completely, relieved and went back by 'bus to huts near Etrun (three miles north-west of Arras).

The huts being consistently shelled by a H.V. gun the Battalion moved on the 10th to Haute Avesnes, where it received a draft of two hundred and three other ranks.

Here the stay of the First Battalion was to be of short duration.

The Thirteenth Battalion. As nothing has been heard of the Thirteenth Battalion since it left Hopoutre by train on March 29th it may be convenient to bring the record of its movements up to date, for these were somewhat peculiar. Detraining at Bouquemaison at 3.0 p.m. on the 30th, it marched to Doullens and entrained again for a suburb of Amiens, which it reached at 11.0 p.m. Followed a march to Pont Noyelles, six miles along the Amiens-Albert road and, after a few hours' rest, a return by lorry to Marieux, four miles from Doullens. That night, April 1st, the Battalion went into the reserve line of the Gommecourt sector and close to the sector held in 1915.

On the 5th the Battalion went into the front line and on the 8th suffered a most grievous loss in the death of its commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel W. R. Stewart, D.S.O., M.C., who was shot by an enemy sniper whilst going round the front-line trenches, after having held command for nearly a year.

Walter Robert Stewart was the son of Major-General the Hon. A. Stewart,

and great-great-nephew of Colonel the Hon. William Stewart, who served with the Regiment in its first action at Copenhagen, 1801.

Born on February 7th, 1888, he went to Harrow and Sandhurst and was gazetted to the Regiment in January, 1908.

He went to France with the Seventh Battalion in May, 1915, and for his services at Hooge in July–August of that year received the M.C. During the Battle of the Somme he was in command of the Eighth Battalion and was wounded on September 15th, 1916. In March, 1917, he returned to France and assumed command of the Thirteenth Battalion when Colonel Pretor-Pinney was mortally wounded on April 23rd, 1917.

In addition to the M.C. he was awarded the D.S.O. and a brevet majority and was thrice mentioned in despatches.

* He was a most ardent soldier and a keen Rifleman and more than once declined to accept an appointment in order to remain with his own Battalion.

His Divisional Commander wrote of him: "He was beloved of his Battalion which he had raised—both officers and men—to a very high level of efficiency. The Army has lost a brilliant leader, just on the threshold of his career. I shall always be grateful to him for the magnificent example he set to his Battalion, and to the whole Division, of what a Commanding Officer should be."

He was buried on April 10th in the British Cemetery at Couin.

So concludes the record of the Battalions in France during the great German thrust which began on March 21st, 1918.

As a result of this battle four Battalions were shortly to disappear, as fighting battalions, for ever.

But for the moment attention must be given to the next great enemy assault—The Attack on the Lys.

* "Rifle Brigade Chronicle," 1918.

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE OF THE LYS.*

APRIL 9th-30th, 1918.

THE SUMMER OF 1918.

UPON the conclusion of the Somme Retreat on April 4th/5th the German High Command decided to put into execution another attack for which preparations had been in progress for some time.

Even before March 21st Sir Douglas Haig had been aware of these preparations and, in the first days of April, there were indications that these were nearing completion. †

Sir Douglas had intended to relieve the two Portuguese Divisions by April 10th; they had been continuously in the line north of the La Bassée Canal for a long period and needed rest.

The enemy attack, however, took place on April 9th before the 2nd Portuguese Division had been relieved.

For this attack Ludendorff intended to employ, in first instance, nine divisions, and his aim was ‡ “to push through between La Bassée and Armentières, capture Bethune and form a defensive flank along the Aire-La Bassée Canal.”

“Then he would direct his main pressure north-west, aiming at the capture of Hazebrouck and the ridge of hills north of Bailleul. This would utterly dislocate the whole British front towards the coast and compel a general retirement west of Dunkirk and the floods of the River Aa.”

What actually happened is a matter of history. Ludendorff's original conception of the attack, which was carried out first by the Sixth German Army (Von Quast) in the south and also later by the Fourth (Sixt von Armin) further north, was that it should be subsidiary to the main attack in the south: the Allied reserves having been used up in the fighting in the north one more heavy blow should be sufficient to cause the fall of Amiens. The unexpected scale of the successes gained on and after April 9th, however, caused the enemy High Command on April 12th to throw in on the north all available reserves: the bait of the Channel Ports was

* Map will be found facing p. 288.

† Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch, dated July 20th, 1918.

‡ “A History of the Great War,” Buchan, Vol. IV, p. 219.

fatally attractive, the subsidiary operation became the main blow, and the Amiens offensive perforce became secondary to that on the Lys.

Such was the situation when the First Battalion arrived upon the scene.

The First
Battalion.
April 12th, 1918. On April 11th the First Battalion was warned to be ready to move at four hours' notice, and at 8.30 a.m. on the 12th it received orders to embuss at 11.0 a.m. This it did and at 6.15 p.m. debussed at Busnes (north-east of Lillers). At 7.0 p.m. the Battalion moved off to take over from the 2nd Bn. Suffolk Regt. a portion of the line on the La Bassée Canal.

* "Information and news were very contradictory and very vague and no one quite knew what the situation was."

Actually at this time the limit of the German advance formed a salient which ran as follows:—

Starting on the south from the British front line at Givenchy, which since April 9th had stood firm in the safe custody of the 55th (West Lancashire) Division, the line ran westwards north of the canal to just short of Hinges; thence, turning roughly north-west, it included Locon and Riez du Vinage and ran to a point immediately east of Robecq; thence it bent north-eastwards, including Merville but excluding Bailleul, and passed through Neuve Eglise.

"The Battalion took up a position along the La Bassée Canal between Pacaut Wood and Robecq. It took us some time to sort ourselves out in the dark and settle down in the unknown country, but once it got light things were easier. H.Q. was in a cottage in Bellerive with 'B' and 'I' Companies along the canal and 'A' and 'C' were in support. The Somerset Light Infantry was on our left and the 1st Bn. Gordon Highlanders, of the 3rd Division, on our right.

"There was a very thick mist during the morning of April 13th and we were able to get well settled in under cover of it. It took some time to fix on H.Q. for companies, but they eventually established themselves in some very comfortable farm-houses and cottages.

"We found ourselves facing the Boche along the southern end of his salient and almost at the apex of it where he had made his biggest advance south-west of Merville. It was a funny situation altogether and there is no doubt he had very little idea where he was and his units were very mixed up and disorganized.

"On the 14th we extended our left and took over the defence of some more bridges up to Robecq, while the Somersets had a very successful

' minor operation ' that brought in one hundred and fifty prisoners and twenty machine-guns. We had some rare good musketry practice from the canal bank at Boches who were bolting from various houses. The change from trench-warfare was a very pleasant one and it seemed odd to be living above ground in cottages instead of below ground in dug-outs. The inhabitants had left behind nearly all their live-stock and at H.Q. we had cows and calves, goats, rabbits and chickens to look after and feed. ' C ' Company's H.Q. was apparently a store for some shop or other as they found large supplies of champagne, soap, candles, dried fruits, flour, etc."

On April 16th the Battalion was relieved and went back to Busnettes, where it stayed until 3.15 a.m. on the 18th, when it was ordered up into support to the 10th Brigade. The latter had been forced to withdraw to the south of the canal and all bridges on the divisional front were blown up.

The Battalion was not engaged and was ordered back to Lannoy for the night.

On the evening of the 19th a return was made to the front line, this time from Avelette Bridge, east of Hinges, northwards along the canal for some fifteen hundred yards.

On the 21st there were readjustments in preparation for an attack next day in collaboration with the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. "C" Company, on relief by a company of the 1st Bn. Somerset Light Infantry, crossed the canal at Pont l'Hinges and took up a position in some houses just north of the canal, while two platoons of "B" Company moved and came under the command of O.C. 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt.

On the afternoon of the 21st it had been possible to study the ground from a concealed position near Pont l'Hinges when it appeared that the enemy was not holding these houses ; this, fortunately, proved to be the case. The bridge had been partially destroyed but the R.E. managed to fix duck-boards across the gap in the middle so that one man could cross at a time. Half of "C" Company crossed by this means and half ferried themselves across in two derelict barges which the Germans had used in an attack some days earlier. The night was dark and quiet but the enemy clearly was unsuspicious.

The following is Colonel Fellowes' account of the action :—

" On April 22nd we took part in a most successful
Pacaut Wood. attack with the Hampshires on our left which resulted
April 22nd, 1918. in the capture of the southern portion of Pacaut Wood
and the advance of our line up to La Pannerie. ' C ' Company and the
two platoons of ' B ' Company did splendidly, capturing over sixty prisoners
and several machine-guns.

"At 5.18 a.m. the advance began. 'C' Company very quickly reached its objective, capturing a row of houses along the Hinges-La Pannerie road for about five hundred yards. These it occupied, but later on, owing to very heavy shelling, had to leave them and dig in in front of them behind hedges, consolidating a strong position facing east and north-east and forming a defensive flank back to the canal. In the meantime 'B' Company, following behind the right-hand column of the Hampshires that worked along the right of the wood, passed round the outside of the wood and, on reaching the Riez du Vinage-La Pannerie road, turning right-handed, quickly established a line of posts along and in front of the road joining up with the northern post of 'C' Company and establishing an advanced Lewis-gun post in a farmhouse some two hundred yards in front.

"Serjeants Woodall and Stroud, of 'B' Company, particularly distinguished themselves, the former capturing over thirty prisoners himself and taking entire charge when Adams was killed.*

"Serjeant Stroud went on ahead of his platoon during the advance and dug out the Boches from camouflaged shell-holes, forcing them to surrender.

"A/Corporals Dunbar and Dyde, both of 'B' Company, did splendid work."

For these operations Serjeant Smith was awarded a Bar to the Military Medal and Serjeants Metcalfe and Stroud, A/Corporals French, Dunbar, Dyde and Roder with Riflemen Jemmett and Clements received the Military Medal.

For the rest of the day shell-fire was intense, especially along the canal bank, causing many casualties, specially among two companies of the Somerset Light Infantry, who were attached for the day.

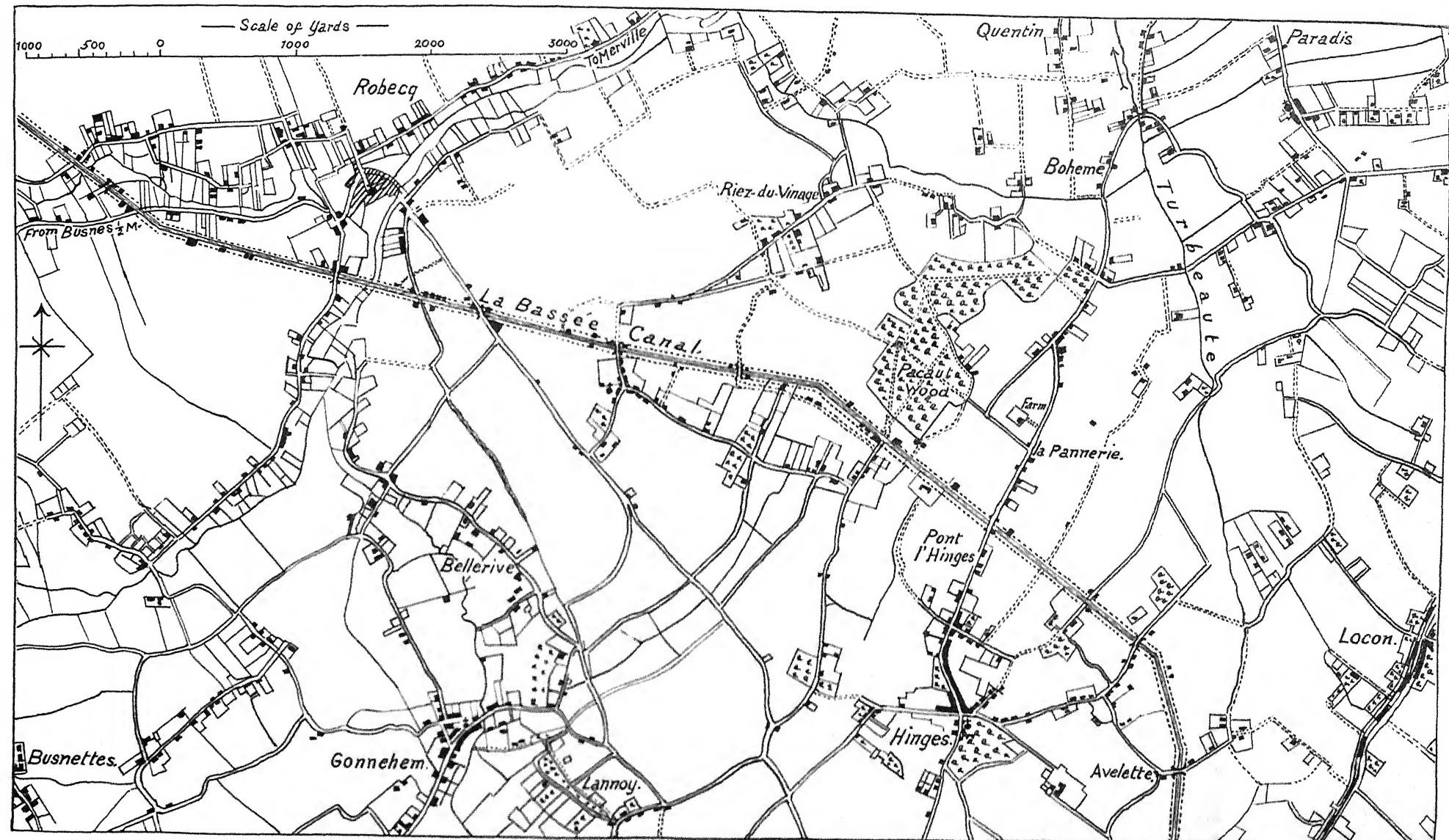
In fact the shelling continued to be severe until the Battalion was finally relieved on April 26th and went back to Gonnehem. During the last few days "A" and "I" Companies did some useful work patrolling on the canal bank and establishing five advanced posts on the far side of the canal.

Casualties had been:—Captain J. E. Trevor-Jones, M.C., Lieutenant L. H. Adams, 2nd-Lieutenant H. C. V. Sharps and forty other ranks killed; Captain R. J. F. Chance, M.C., 2nd-Lieutenants J. W. Martin, C. G. Cooper, A. E. Salter and one hundred other ranks wounded (Major I. C. Montford was also wounded but rejoined); eight other ranks wounded-at-duty and four missing.

* For his gallantry on this day Serjeant Woodall was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross.

THE BATTLES OF THE LYS.

1918.



THE FIRST BATTALION ON THE LA BASSÉE CANAL.

April, 1918.

The Sixteenth
Battalion
Detachment.

* The only other Battalion of the Regiment concerned with the Battle of the Lys was the Sixteenth. It was represented by a half-company only, for much had happened in the 39th Division.

On April 10th the division was reduced to one composite brigade and on the 11th Colonel Coke left to assume command of No. 3 Composite Battalion, taking with him Captain G. V. Taylor, M.C., as adjutant, and one hundred and fourteen other ranks to form a half-company of the battalion which consisted of two Sherwood Forester companies and two Rifle companies, the 17th Bn. 60th forming the remainder of the latter. On the 12th the residue of the 117th Brigade became two companies of No. 5 Composite Battalion and proceeded to Borre, east of Hazebrouck, where they may conveniently be left working on the defences of that place; two hundred and thirty-six other ranks of the Sixteenth Battalion were included in this party.

Space forbids a detailed account of the doings of Colonel Coke and his party. Moving by light railway it arrived on the 12th in camp near Kruisstraathoek and came under the orders of the 21st Division. For three days it occupied various camps round and about Dickebusch Lake, being shelled out of at least one of them, and, on the 16th, the two Rifle companies were moved back to Reninghelst, whilst the remainder of the battalion, in company with other troops, carried out a successful counter-attack near the Grand Bois, at Wytschaete. On arrival at their destination the Rifle companies were immediately ordered back to the line and went into support in the Wytschaete sector. There they remained during the 17th, the Battalion now being under the orders of the 9th Division.

During the 18th and 19th the two Rifle companies remained in the line under the orders of the 1st South African Regiment, but on the second evening were relieved and moved back to Awapuni Lines, north of Dickebusch Lake, where they remained, finding working-parties daily, until the 25th, when the enemy, opening a very heavy bombardment at 2.45 a.m., forced the battalion to evacuate camp and take to the fields.

During this day the composite battalion occupied successively the G.H.Q. Second Line from Ridge Wood to Kruisstraathoek cross-roads, and next a defensive flank from Vierstraat cross-roads to the southern edge of Dickebusch Lake. The enemy having broken through across the Vierstraat cross-roads the Sixteenth Battalion and 17th Bn. 60th company took up a position from the southern end of Ridge Wood to Confusion Corner, five hundred yards west-north-west of Vierstraat. Here the company

* Vide general Map of the Ypres Salient facing p. 166.

appears to have remained until next day, the 26th, when at 2.0 p.m. the enemy was seen to be massing behind Vierstraat. The artillery was put on to this concentration and its fire, combined with that of rifles and machine-guns, caused such casualties to the enemy that any intended attack was completely broken up. On the right of the Rifle company was the New Zealand Cyclist Corps and on the left the 1st Bn. Lincolnshire Regt., so the British Empire was well represented in this successful local action.

On the 27th the Rifle company was moved back into G.H.Q. Second Line and later to camp near Ouderdom, where it remained until the morning of the 29th, when, being shelled out of camp, it occupied an old trench line in rear of the camp.

Here it appears to have remained until May 3rd, when No. 3 Composite Battalion returned to the 117th Brigade, forty-eight other ranks of the Rifle company rejoining the Sixteenth Battalion.

Each unit represented in the 39th Divisional Composite Brigade received the congratulations of the Army and Corps Commanders—Sir H. Plumer and Sir A. Godley—and a special letter of thanks from General David Campbell, Commanding the 21st Division.

Casualties in the Sixteenth Battalion half-company had been fifteen other ranks killed, twenty-one wounded and eight missing.

The career of the Sixteenth Battalion as a fighting unit was now at an end. Its subsequent employment must be dealt with later, for it is now time to turn to operations further south and to record their consequences to the Second Battalion—the only other Battalion of the Regiment to be seriously engaged at the end of April.

Back to the South.

**The Second
Battalion.**

The Second Battalion at Le Mesge at once settled down to re-organization and training whilst large drafts of reinforcements, both officers and men, arrived almost daily. On April 11th Captain R. A. Mostyn-Owen assumed command with the rank of major and on the 12th Captain B. C. Pascoe, M.C., became brigade-major, 25th Infantry Brigade.

On April 13th the Battalion entrained at Hangest for St. Roche (Amiens) and was billeted in the Rivery-Camion area. Here training continued, whilst on April 17th Major Mostyn-Owen was permitted to "put up" the badges of lieutenant-colonel.

On the 20th the Battalion relieved in the line portions of the 55th and 56th Battalions of the 14th Australian Brigade. The 25th Brigade held the line north of the Villers-Bretonneux-Warfusée highway with two battalions in line and one in reserve as counter-attack battalion.

The Second Battalion was on the left with "C" Company (right) and "B" (left) in the line, "A" in support and "D" in reserve. The relief was very quiet, as also was the succeeding day and night during which a considerable amount of work was done, including a continuous apron of wire in front of the front line. Unhappily events were to show that this wire was to be of little use.

On the 22nd "A" Company took over from the right battalion the line as far as, but excluding, the main highway at a point just east of the Marcelcave-Fouilloy road, and thus covered the whole brigade front. On this day Lieut.-Colonel H. S. C. Richardson assumed command; Lieut.-Colonel Mostyn-Owen going to take command of the Thirteenth Battalion.

Late on this day reports were received that the enemy proposed attacking at dawn on the 23rd. As a fact the German High Command had decided upon another attack with a view to securing the high ground about Cachy and Bois l'Abbé which would give direct observation into Amiens at a distance of less than eight miles and the important railway centre of Longueau at less than four.

In the meanwhile at 2.0 a.m. on April 23rd a patrol under 2nd-Lieutenant P. G. McCubbin went out to reconnoitre the right front of the Battalion. At 3.0 a.m. a wounded Rifleman returned and reported that the officer and others of the patrol had been wounded. Another patrol was immediately sent out but found no trace of the first, which had, apparently, walked into an enemy post. Eventually two unwounded members of the first patrol re-entered our lines, but 2nd-Lieutenant McCubbin was missing; he had only joined the Battalion on the 12th.

As a fact the enemy did not attack upon this day, "probably as it was a wet morning," the Battalion diary hazards.

Late that day there were again reports that the enemy would attack at dawn on the 24th. Also he was seen moving west from Warfusée whilst two trains were observed south of that place; to deal with this the services of the "heavies" were called upon and nearer targets on the high-road were dealt with by the Second Battalion with Lewis-gun and rifle fire. During the night the 25th Brigade had ordered half of "D" Company into close support on the right and half on the left.

**The German attack
on Villers-Breton-**

On April 24th the Germans attacked on the whole front between the Somme and the Avre.*

neux.

April 24th, 1918.

At 3.45 a.m. a heavy enemy barrage came down in which was included a number of gas shells. This con-

* In Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch, dated July 20th, 1918, published as a Supplement to the London Gazette dated October 21st, 1918, the date of this attack is incorrectly given as April 23rd. In "Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches," J. H. Boraston, the correct date is given.

tinued, falling chiefly between the reserve line and Battalion H.Q.,* until 7.0 a.m. Continual reports were received from officers commanding companies that the barrage was not on the front line or close-support platoons of "D" Company. The reason for this will presently become apparent.

The morning was very misty and the enemy put down a smoke-barrage at dawn so that it was impossible to see further than twenty yards.

About 7.0 a.m. a runner from "A" Company reported at Battalion H.Q. that the enemy had got round the right flank of the company and was attacking it and the close-support platoons of "D" Company from flank and rear and was moving towards "C" Company.

At 8.0 a.m. "B" Company was ordered to form a defensive flank joining with the close-support platoons of "D" Company (northern half) and the remains of "C" Company from "B" Company's right to the reserve line —some twelve hundred yards further west.

Battalion H.Q. details moved forward to continue the line covering Battalion H.Q. and in touch with the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. on the right and north-west of Villers-Bretonneux. 2nd-Lieutenant K. J. Guerrier and remains of "A," "C" and "D" Companies joined this line during the morning.

At 9.0 a.m. enemy Vérey lights were seen going up on the north-western outskirts of Villers-Bretonneux, whilst enemy machine-guns opened fire on the vicinity of Battalion headquarters.

The reserve line and the neighbourhood of the new line joining with the Royal Berkshire Regiment was shelled at intervals all day and "B" Company on the left was heavily trench-mortared at intervals. The Germans advanced several times on the right of this company but were driven off each time by rifle and machine-gun fire.

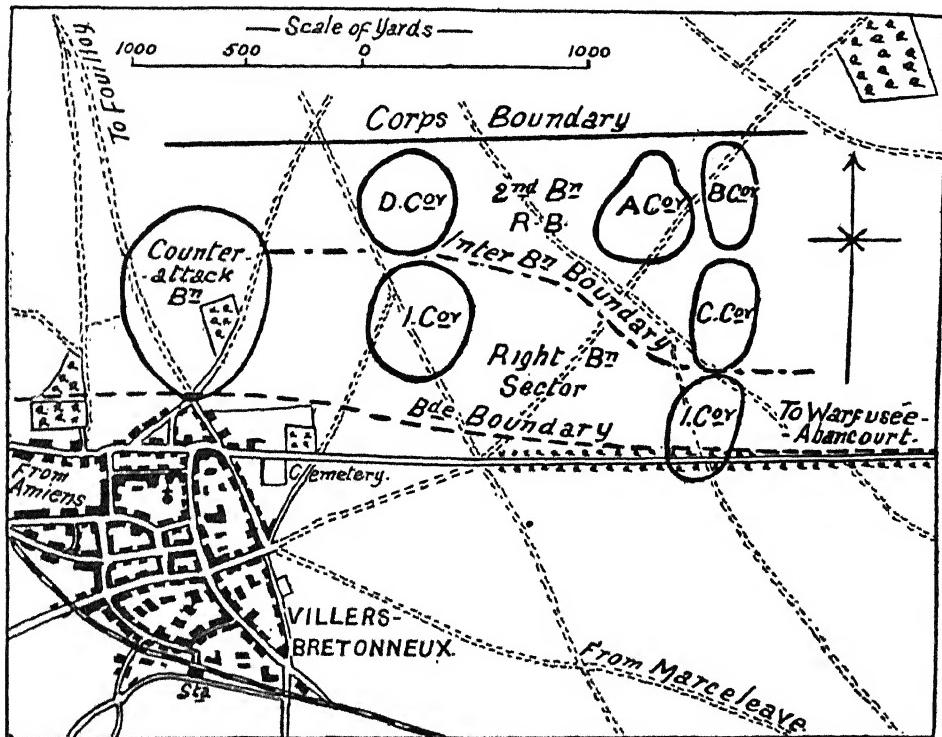
Only afterwards was it ascertained that the enemy, after breaking through south of the Villers-Bretonneux-Warfusée road, had turned northwards between our front and support lines, and even in rear of the latter, being unobserved owing to the mist and smoke barrage.†

"A" and "C" Companies, taken unawares in the rear, were overwhelmed after a sharp fight with superior numbers of the enemy, the whole of the two companies, with few exceptions, being killed or captured. Very little could be found out regarding their exact fate, but it is known that one platoon of "D" Company fought to the last man and was completely

* The position of Battalion H.Q. is not given, but appears to have been some one thousand five hundred yards from Villers-Bretonneux along the Hamel road.

† In this attack German tanks were for the first time employed, but the Second Battalion War Diary makes no mention of the fact. The first British tanks to engage them being "female" (i.e. armed with the machine-gun only), were unable to withstand them, but "male" tanks, which came on the scene later in the day, proved more than a match for the German tank.

THE BATTLE OF THE ANCRE.



THE SECOND BATTALION—GERMAN ATTACK ON VILLERS-BRETONNEUX.

24th April, 1918.

wiped out. 2nd-Lieutenant J. Doyle, dangerously wounded whilst commanding this platoon, was found during the night of the 24th/25th during a counter-attack by the Australians.

The remainder of the day passed without further attack on the front of the Battalion except for half-hearted attempts to turn the right flank of "B" Company; these were frustrated by that company's effective fire.

On the night of the 24th/25th a counter-attack on Villers-Bretonneux and on the ground north and south of the village was carried out by the 13th and 15th Australian Brigades and the 54th British Brigade, the second-named brigade being entrusted with the attack north of the village through the 25th Brigade area.

The Australians established themselves north and south of Villers-Bretonneux and beyond the line of the village, the left of the 15th Brigade being connected with the refused flank of "B" Company by the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. The Battalion's lines were shelled at intervals throughout the night.

The Battalion was not attacked on the 25th and, early that night, certain readjustments were made in its dispositions; before the night was past, however, the Battalion was moved to a counter-attack position west of the village.

On April 26th, the situation on the south-eastern outskirts of Villers-Bretonneux being obscure, the 8th Division ordered the Second Battalion to clear it up. It was reported that the enemy had established a machine-gun post on the railway four hundred yards east of the station and others towards the Monument, and the Battalion was ordered to clear this area and establish itself outside the village on the east and south. The brigadier-major, 25th Brigade (Captain Pascoe, Rifle Brigade), brought the orders personally and himself accompanied the two platoons of "B" Company, under 2nd-Lieutenant T. McGee, which were detailed to carry out the reconnaissance.

The party met with considerable resistance outside the village but inflicted casualties on the enemy and put his machine-gun teams out of action; eventually it occupied some ruined houses on the road running from the village to the Monument and handed it over to the 22nd Bn. Durham L.I. on receiving orders to withdraw.

The party had lost 2nd-Lieutenant McGee killed (he had only joined the Battalion on the 18th) and twenty-six other ranks killed and wounded.

April 27th was a quiet day as the Battalion remained where it was and was not called upon to undertake active operations.

On April 28th the Battalion marched back to billets in Boutillerie, south-

east of Amiens, and on the 30th moved by 'bus to billets in Huchenneville, near Abbeville.

Casualties between April 23rd and 26th were, of officers, one killed, three wounded, two wounded and missing and nine missing ; of other ranks, eighteen killed, ninety-six wounded and two hundred and sixty-eight missing.

The above actions of the First, Sixteenth, and Second Battalions concluded the Regiment's active part in resisting the great German thrusts of March and April, 1918.

The Thirteenth Battalion. Some account, however, must be given of the doings of the Thirteenth Battalion before considering the effect of these battles upon four other Battalions of the Regiment.

On April 12th Lieut.-Colonel H. S. C. Richardson assumed command of the Thirteenth Battalion which came out of the front line the same night and went into reserve. It remained either in reserve or in the front line in the Hebuterne sector until the 17th, when it marched to billets in Louvencourt, between Acheux and Marieux. On the 20th Colonel Richardson left to command the Second Battalion and was succeeded by Lieut.-Colonel R. A. Mostyn-Owen. On the 24th the Battalion left Louvencourt by lorry and that night went into the front line opposite Ablainzevelle ; here, and in support, it spent the remainder of the month. The Battalion diary records little of hostile activity during April, but the casualties suffered show that it was no peaceful time. In addition to the death of Colonel Stewart three officers were wounded—2nd-Lieutenants H. Beaumont, M.M., T. Campbell and J. F. Barr—whilst other rank casualties amounted to two hundred and one.

The same routine continued until May 7th.

THE SEVENTH, EIGHTH, NINTH AND SIXTEENTH BATTALIONS CEASE TO BE FIGHTING UNITS.

At the end of April no Battalion of the Regiment was engaged in active operations, so it may be convenient to record here the close of the fighting career of those Battalions whose divisions were being broken up.

From their billets in St. Fuscien the battalions in the 14th Division on April 10th started on a long and somewhat meaningless journey. Entaining at Saleux, they moved to an area east of Eu, near the sea-coast west of Abbeville, but on the night of the 11th/12th took train once more and moved to the Fruges area. On the 15th the three Battalions were formed into a composite battalion known as the 7th Bn. Rifle Brigade,

"D" Battalion of the 43rd Brigade. The Battalion was commanded by Colonel Bligh and was employed at work on the G.H.Q. Defence Line between Aire and Lillers.

But by April 27th the end had come for, on that date, the three Battalions were reduced to training cadres, all surplus officers and men being transferred to the Infantry Base Dépôt at Étaples. The cadres consisted each of ten officers and from fifty to eighty other ranks including the Transport.

A semi-official diary kept by the Eighth Battalion records this event in these words :—

"The Battalion now definitely disbanded, which, to us who have been with it since its formation in early September, 1914, is little short of a tragedy. Ypres—Hooge—Arras—Delville Wood—Flers—Passchendaele—St. Quentin—Villers-Bretonneux. It has fought and suffered much and this is the end!"

The training cadres continued as such for a few more months, but the necessarily short account of their employment must be deferred until later.

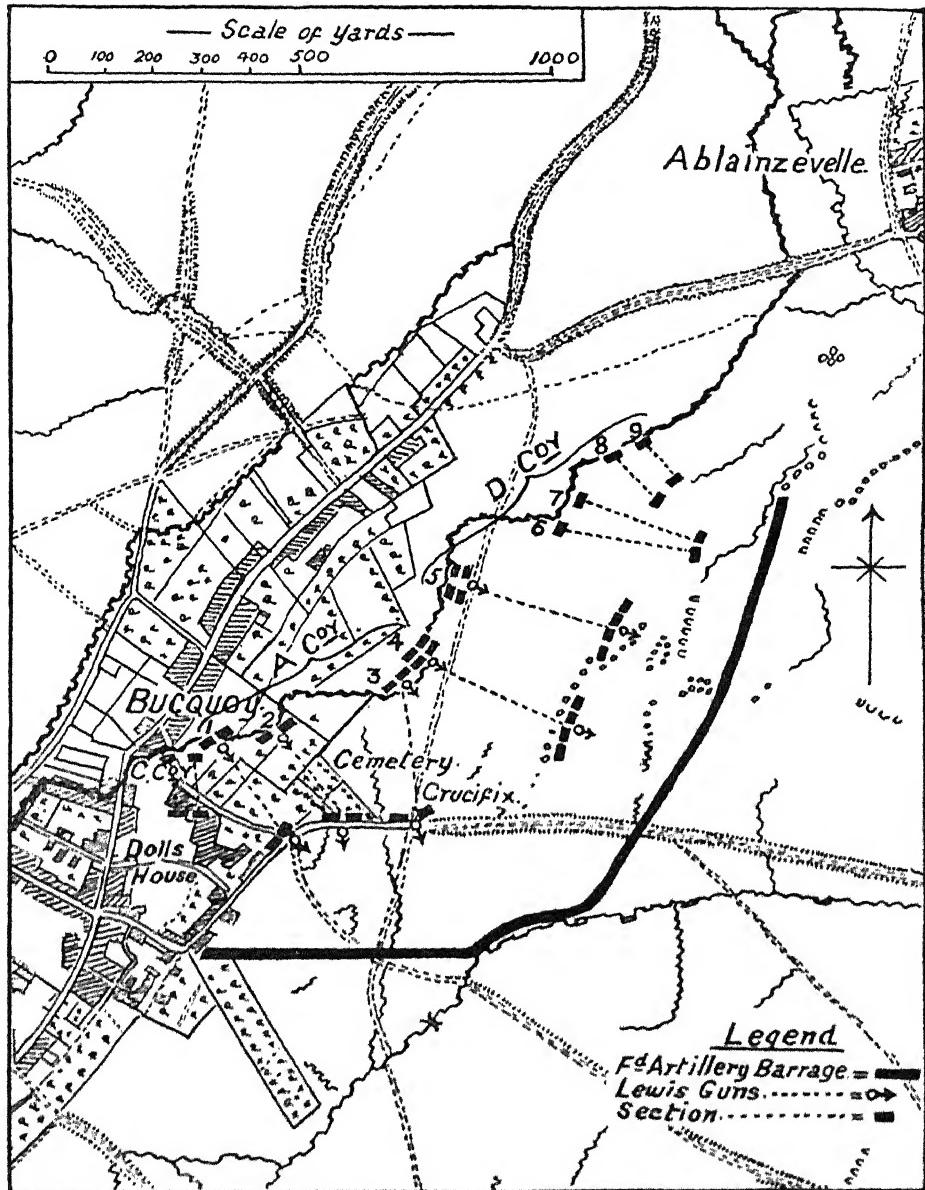
As already related, the fighting career of the Sixteenth Battalion closed on May 3rd with the return of its detachment. Thereafter it was employed, first in the construction of ranges and training grounds for the use of the American Expeditionary Force in the Recques area, and secondly in the instruction of the 308th Regiment, 77th Division, and 117th Regiment, 30th Division, of that Force.

Thus employed, the Battalion, for the present, may well be left where it is.

As the result of the fighting in and about Bucquoy observation for the troops of the 37th Division was not good, and it was decided to undertake what was referred to as a "minor operation" with the object of bringing the enemy lines in the valley east of the village under better view.

The Thirteenth Battalion. The Thirteenth Battalion was selected for the undertaking ; Colonel Mostyn-Owen was told that if it were Bucquoy. found that observation was not improved, and that the May 8th, 1918. general line was not as good as the former one, he might use his discretion as to whether the line was held or not.

Orders for the attack were very elaborate so no more than an abridged version can be given here. Two companies were to be employed in front line, "A" on the right and "D" on the left, with "C" and "B" in support.



THE THIRTEENTH BATTALION AT BUCQUOY.

8th May, 1918.

"A" Company was to be divided into four parties with a main objective of the Cemetery and Crucifix; "B," in five parties, would prolong the line to the north. There would be no artillery barrage until called for by the companies, who would not demand it except in extreme urgency. The date of the attack was May 8th and at midnight 7th/8th companies would move to their assembly positions. Zero hour was 2.0 p.m.

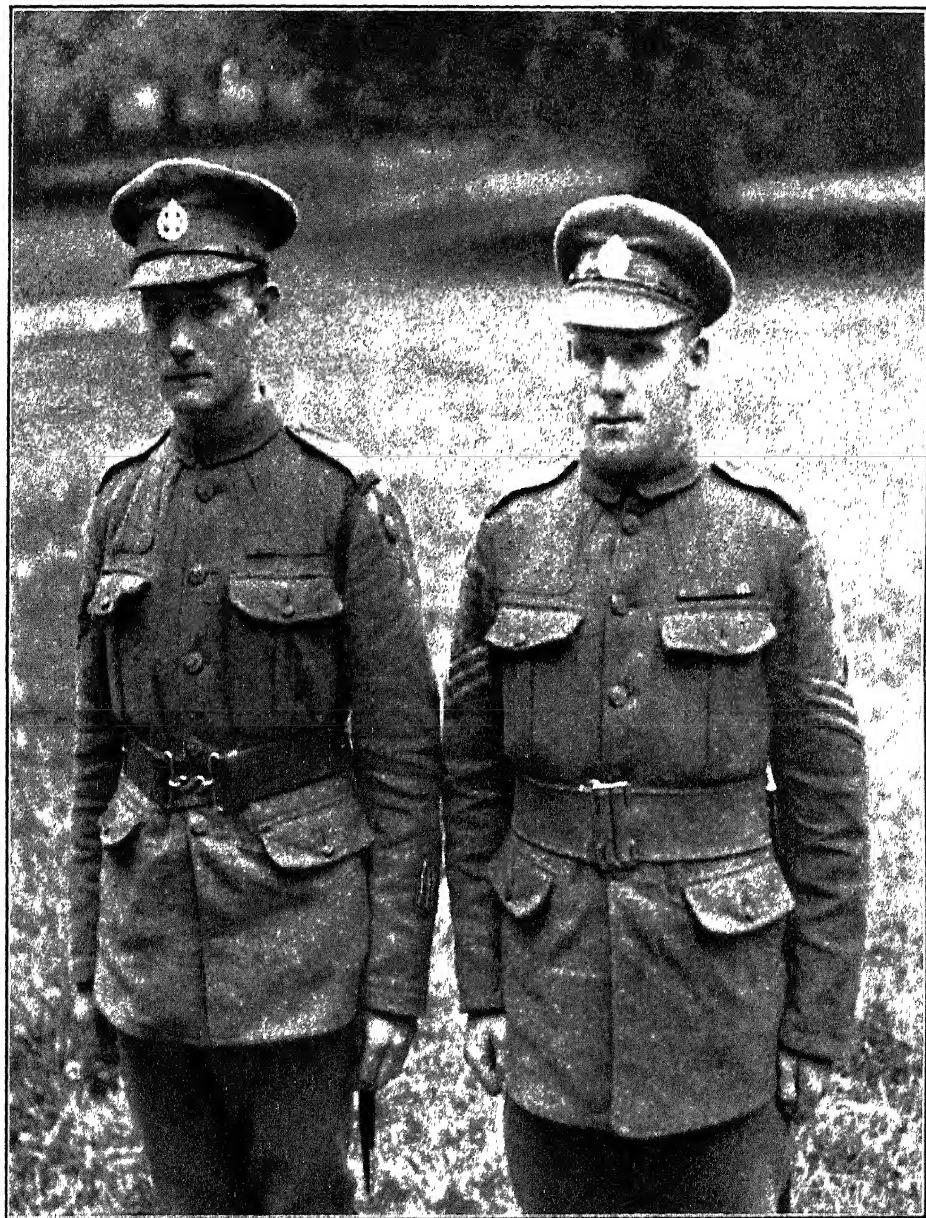
The attack started punctually and it was soon found that the right company would have trouble from the Cemetery and Crucifix. The parties of this company got on with varying success, but machine-gun fire from these two places caused many casualties. Two parties detailed for the attack on the Cemetery rushed a machine-gun and killed the team. There were at least thirty Germans in the Cemetery, of whom eleven were sent back as prisoners and the remainder killed. 2nd-Lieutenant G. D. Fraser having been wounded in the Cemetery, Serjeant Gregg took command and the parties pushed on to the Crucifix, which they occupied, as well as posts to the north. The enemy counter-attacked from a support trench and got round the right flank, whereupon the parties fell back to the edge of the Cemetery; here they were reinforced by a section of the support company and, returning to the charge, bombed the enemy back. They remained there until, under orders, they withdrew at 5.40 p.m., having lost half their strength.

The next party on the left, a platoon, came under enfilade machine-gun fire and lost the platoon serjeant and three section commanders killed, or wounded. Rifleman Beesley took command and continued to advance.

First, with a Lewis-gun, he engaged an enemy machine-gun and knocked it out; continuing, he encountered four enemy posts, one of which he rushed single-handed; from this he extracted five German officers, of whom he killed one, wounded one, and disarmed three, sending them back as prisoners.

Next Rifleman Beesley single-handed rushed a post on the left, the machine-gun post referred to above, and found one dead and two live Germans; the latter he disarmed and sent back. Having obtained touch with the section on the left, he returned to the captured machine-gun position and mounted his Lewis-gun there, the No. 2 (the only other survivor of the section) having arrived with the gun. There he remained with the No. 2 (whose name, unhappily, is not recorded), who, although wounded about 7.0 p.m., remained until the pair brought their gun back into the line at 10.0 p.m. During these activities Rifleman Beesley did considerable execution with the 600-800 rounds he fired, whilst he also rescued a valuable disposition map which a German officer was about to destroy.*

* For their actions upon this day Serjeant W. Gregg, D.C.M., M.M., and Rifleman Beesley were each awarded the Victoria Cross.



RIFLEMAN W. BEESLEY, V.C.,
AND
SERJEANT W. GREGG, V.C., D.C.M., M.M.

In the left company the right-hand party, consisting of thirty-four other ranks under Lieutenant F. L. Edgerton, reached its objective, some six hundred yards north-east of the Crucifix, and threw bombs into it. About four or five of the enemy immediately came out and surrendered, but a German serjeant-major, looking out from a shelter, picked up a bomb and threw it, wounding a serjeant, whilst, at the same time, Lieutenant Edgerton was wounded by a machine-gun bullet; the party, however, entered the trench and took eleven prisoners, including the serjeant-major.

2nd-Lieutenant A. C. W. George, seeing that Lieutenant Edgerton was wounded, went up from the support company and took charge, getting the Lewis-gun into action and covering the advance of the right company. On the right of the position a large number of the enemy was seen retiring and fire was opened, which caused many casualties. 2nd-Lieutenant W. H. Mitchell then arrived to take command, but fire became so hot that the party had to keep well down. Observation being poor, not much more could be done and, eventually, the withdrawal of the right company combined with a simultaneous advance of the enemy, on the right, caused the withdrawal of the party.

The next party under A/Corporal Smith came under heavy fire, but Corporal Smith and one man rushed the enemy wire, reaching another belt of wire three or four yards from the objective; the corporal was killed and the party eventually withdrew at dusk, it being impossible to do so earlier.

The three left-hand parties, without a casualty, reached within twenty or thirty yards of the enemy position; here it found excellent observation over the valley to the east and south-east of Bucquoy and proceeded to dig in.

During the afternoon the enemy was observed massing in this valley and was fired on with rifles and Lewis-guns.

At 6.0 p.m. a hostile smoke barrage was observed south of Ablainzevelle and small-arms fire was opened into it; red Vérey lights were fired as a signal to the artillery but these apparently were not seen owing to their unsuitability as a daylight signal.

As has been seen, the difficulties experienced by the parties on the right led to the successive withdrawal of those further north.

Casualties had been sufficiently heavy. Of officers, Lieutenant F. L. Edgerton and 2nd-Lieutenants M. A. Stapleton, A. A. Gower, A. C. W. George, and G. D. Fraser were wounded—the last-named, unfortunately, dying subsequently of his wounds—whilst 2nd-Lieutenant J. Forrester, officially reported as missing, was later reported to have been killed.

"For the Duration" * gives the total number of killed as forty-nine, but the official returns give approximately that figure for the killed and wounded combined. In any case, the total other rank casualties were in the neighbourhood of one hundred.

In addition 2nd-Lieutenant J. F. Mayersbach had, unhappily, been killed on May 4th.

Leaving the Thirteenth Battalion here it will be convenient to turn to the opening of the last great German offensive and to record its effect on the Second Battalion—the only Battalion of the Regiment to be involved.

THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE AISNE.

In his Despatch † Sir Douglas Haig states:—

"Arrangements had been made at the end of April to hand over to the French for employment on a quiet part of their front a further five divisions, comprising the IXth Corps. These had only just been reconstituted, and being badly in need of rest and training, were not yet considered fit to hold an active sector. In return for these five British divisions, and in accordance with Marshal Foch's views, presently explained, regarding the enemy's intentions, the French had dispatched a number of their divisions to be held in reserve in rear of the British right and to strengthen the Flanders front. . . .

"At this period, early in May, the Allied High Command repeatedly expressed the opinion that the enemy would renew his attack on a large scale on the front Arras-Amiens-Montdidier. The strategic results to be obtained by the capture of Amiens, the separation of the French and British Armies and an advance towards the sea along the Valley of the Somme were very great, and might well have proved decisive. The enemy's opening offensive had already brought him within a measurable distance of success in this direction, and had carried his Armies through practically the whole of our organized lines of defence. . . .

"The British General Staff had always held the opinion that before the resumption of the enemy's main offensive on the Arras-Amiens-Montdidier front the attack on our northern flank in Flanders would be followed by a similar attack on the southern flank of the Allied Armies. This view proved correct. Though probably delayed by his unexpectedly extensive commitments in the Lys battle, at the end of May the enemy developed

* "For the Duration," D. H. Rowlands, p. 125.

† Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch dated December 21st, 1918, published as a Supplement to the London Gazette, dated January 3rd, 1919.

his plan of operations on the lines which we had foreseen, and launched a violent surprise attack on the Aisne front."

At the end of April and beginning of May the IXth British Corps (Lieut.-General Sir A. Hamilton-Gordon), comprising the 8th, 21st, 25th, 50th and, subsequently, 19th Divisions, were placed at Marshal Foch's disposal and were dispatched by him to the Sixth French Army to replace certain French divisions concentrated behind Amiens. The recent history of the 8th Division is familiar; the other four divisions had all taken part in both the Somme and the Lys battles.

The Second Battalion spent May 1st and 2nd at Huchenville and whilst there received a message of warm congratulation from
The Second Battalion. the divisional commander on the splendid work done by Captain Pascoe and the two platoons taken out by him south-east of Villers-Bretonneux, on April 25th.

The move to the Abbeville area appears to have been somewhat premature, for, on May 3rd, the 25th Brigade, which alone of the 8th Division had been moved, returned to the Amiens area; the Second Battalion moving by 'bus to Salouel, just south-west of the town.

On May 5th the move to the south began, the Battalion entraining at Saleux and detraining at Fère-en-Tardenois, whence it marched to billets at Lhuys, some seven miles to the north, and south of the valley of the River Vesle.

Here the Battalion remained training, whilst on the 7th a telegram was received from the Colonel-in-Chief in reply to one sent on the occasion of H.R.H.'s birthday:

" My best thanks to all ranks and my heartiest congratulations on their splendid services in the recent fighting of which I and the whole Regiment are proud."

On this day also Brig.-General R. H. Husey, D.S.O., M.C., London Rifle Brigade, assumed command of the 25th Brigade vice General Coffin, V.C., D.S.O., promoted to command of the 36th Division. General Husey was one of the original company commanders of the L.R.B., when it was associated with the First Battalion in 1914-15.

On the 9th Captain G. H. G. Anderson, M.C., was awarded the D.S.O., Major A. E. Wass, M.C., a Bar to the M.C., and Captain F. D. R. Milne and 2nd-Lieutenant Sluman the M.C.

On the 10th the Battalion marched to Courlandon (east of Fismes and

on the right bank of the Vesle) and next day to Ventelay, another three miles to the north-east and midway between the Vesle and the Aisne.

On the night of May 12th/13th the Battalion relieved part of the 358th French Infantry Regiment in the front line. The 25th Brigade occupied the sector between the River Aisne and the Miette rivulet with the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. on the right, the Second Battalion on the left, and the 2nd Bn. East Lancashire Regt. in reserve in Guyencourt. There were also two companies of the 24th Brigade allotted to hold the support system of redoubts in the 25th Brigade sector. On the right of the 25th Brigade the 62nd Brigade, 21st Division, would next night relieve the 50th Regiment of Chasseurs, and on the left was the 24th Brigade.

The line held by the 25th Brigade was peculiar in shape. The right battalion was facing partly north-east and partly south-south-east; the forward troops east of Camp de César being in the form of a horseshoe lying across the road running from Cholera Farm to Guignicourt with the toe pointing south-south-east and the heels north-north-west; behind were three posts facing the Aisne, i.e. south-south-east, and a half-company south of the Cholera Farm—Camp de César road some one thousand yards south-south-west of the latter place and facing north-east.

This half-company was in the first line of the battle zone; the remainder of the Battalion was in the outpost zone.

The left battalion sector was rather less complicated although the right company was bent into the form of a "7," of which the head faced north-east and the shank south-east and flanking the north arm of the right battalion's horseshoe.

It may be convenient to quote here the 8th Division History on the line and dispositions taken over from the French.*

"The defensive positions occupied by the Division consisted of an outpost line some one thousand to one thousand five hundred yards in depth, in touch with the enemy and a battle zone immediately in rear, some one thousand five hundred to two thousand yards in depth; all north of the Aisne.

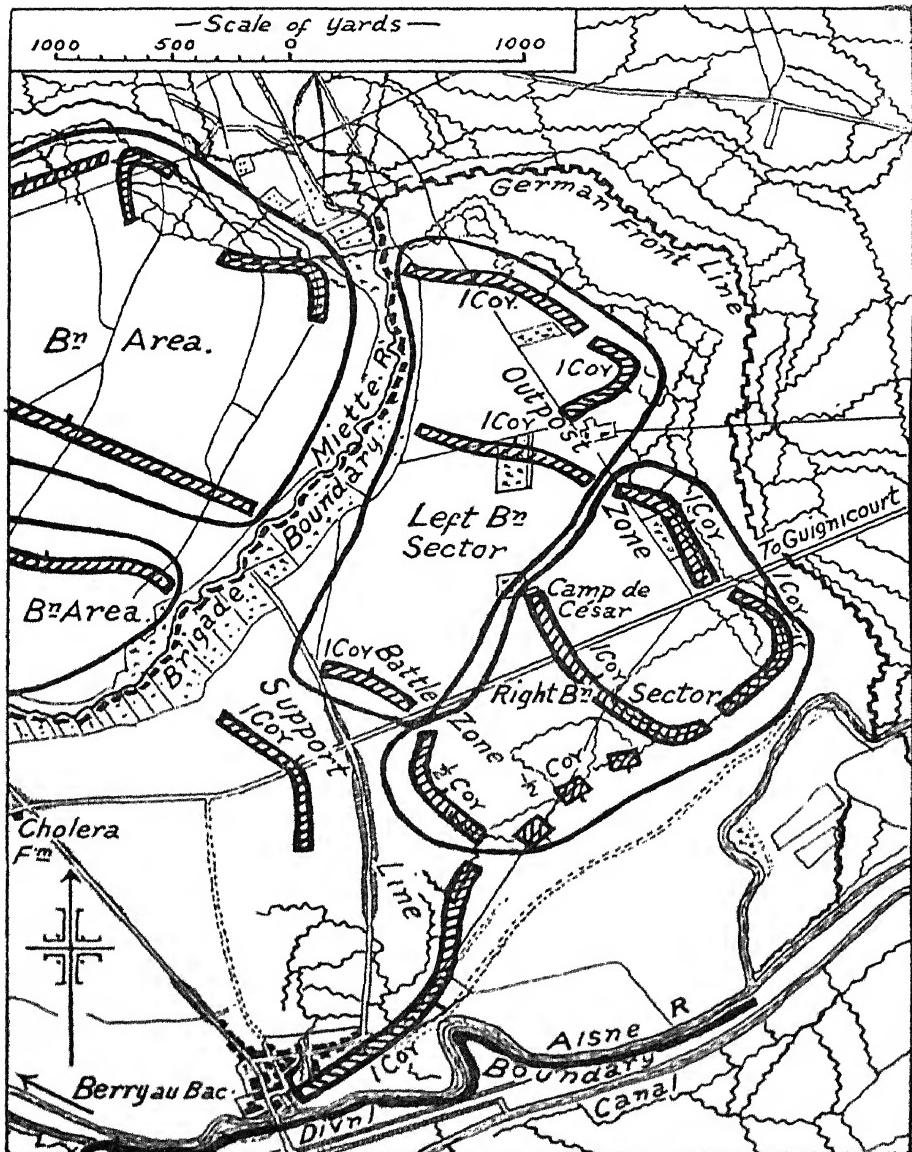
"The orders from the French Command were that not a yard of ground was to be given up. The outpost line was to fight to the last. The battle zone was to be held at all costs, and all reserves were to be put in to retake any portion of this zone which might be lost to the enemy.

"These directions meant that the main infantry strength of the division was committed to the defence of these two zones, and that to support them the greater part of the artillery at the disposal of the 8th Division was posted north of the River Aisne. This was necessary in order that the

* "The 8th Division in the War, 1914-1918," Boraston and Bax, pp. 220 *et seq.*

THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE AISNE.

27th May–6th June, 1918.



POSITION OF THE SECOND BATTALION.

27th May, 1918.

front of the outpost zone should be covered, and in view of the fact that the range of our 18-pdr. gun was more limited than that of the French 75 mm."

The three divisional commanders concerned (8th, 21st and 50th Divisions) each protested vehemently but without avail, the French local command insisting upon this method of defence.

Meanwhile the Second Battalion had a very peaceful time in the line until the 16th, when it went into reserve in billets in Guyencourt, having had no casualty during the tour. Training was carried out and whilst here two Military Medals were awarded for April 24th/25th. On the 18th Captain G. H. G. Anderson, D.S.O., M.C., was appointed adjutant, vice Captain B. C. Pascoe, M.C.

On May 20th the Battalion returned to the line, this time in the right sub-sector of peculiar shape, where again it had a very quiet time. On the night of the 25th/26th much transport was heard in the enemy lines and during the whole of the latter day the enemy was very busy working on his signal lines. During the afternoon and evening large parties of the enemy were seen arriving and entering the trenches on the right of the Battalion. Finally a wire arrived at 25th Brigade H.Q. from the 8th Division to say that an attack would undoubtedly take place the following morning : troops moved to their battle stations but this did not affect the Second Battalion—for it was already in the line.

**The German
Attack.
May 27th, 1918.**

* Once more the weather favoured the enemy for there was a thick mist all night long. At 1.0 a.m., May 27th, a very heavy barrage of gas-shell and trench-mortar bombs came down on the front system, whilst back areas were bombarded with H.E. and gas. This continued until 4.0 a.m., when the enemy infantry attack, supported by tanks, was delivered, smoke being employed which, with the mist, reduced visibility to practically nil.

Once more, as was the case with the Seventh Battalion on March 21st, little is known of what happened to the Second Battalion except that it suffered very heavy casualties during the three hours' bombardment.

In any case the outpost zone was overrun within the hour and Brigade H.Q., just east of Cholera Farm, became involved in the fighting. General Husey went back to organize the defence of Gernicourt, which was held by two companies of the 22nd (Pioneer) Bn. D.L.I., and, later, two companies of the 2nd Bn. East Lancashire Regt., with odd parties of other regiments including those remnants of the Second Battalion which had succeeded

* Map showing movements of the Second Battalion will be found facing p. 368.

in reaching the south bank of the Aisne after making a stand in the front of the battle zone. This position was maintained until about noon, when it became untenable owing to the enemy pushing round the flanks, so another line was taken up from the west end of Gernicourt Wood towards Bouffignereux village, on which place the Germans were rapidly advancing.

At about this time some six hundred men who had been at the Divisional Lewis-Gun School were sent up to help man the position Bouffignereux-Roucy ; these included 2nd-Lieutenant R. C. Ellis and sixty other ranks of the Battalion.

By this time practically all the divisional artillery and the attached French batteries were out of action, or had been captured ; as a fact the majority had been silenced during the preliminary bombardment.

At about 1.20 p.m. the 75th Brigade, 25th Division, was placed at the disposal of the 8th Division by the IXth Corps and the remains of the 25th Brigade were placed under it, the staff of the latter having practically ceased to exist.*

In the evening the 8th Division collected a scratch force from all and any sources available and placed the resultant five hundred men under the 75th Brigade, Captain E. Boughton-Leigh, 2nd-Lieutenant J. Nettleton and forty-four other ranks moving up to form part of this force.

That night the 8th Division was on the line Romain (exclusive) to Les Grands Savarts, some 2,500 yards to the east. The 50th Division was in Romain ; the enemy in Ventelay and Bouvancourt.

The estimated casualties for this day in the Second Battalion were twenty-seven officers and six hundred and eighty other ranks. Of these Captain D. Heaton-Ellis and 2nd-Lieutenant R. C. Ellis were killed and the Commanding Officer (Lieut.-Colonel H. S. C. Richardson), Captain J. Lowder, 2nd-Lieutenants G. C. Hoare, G. D. Denison, and A. H. Halford were wounded : the remaining officers presumably were missing.

The 8th Division had been informed during the night May 27th/28th, that French reinforcements were coming up on the left. At 3.0 a.m., however, news was received that these had been diverted further west into army reserve and the 8th Division report quotes somewhat grimly : " no further supports are available and divisions will therefore hold their present ground to the best of their ability, keeping touch with each other and the French on the flanks."

* Captain B. C. Pascoe, M.C., Rifle Brigade, the brigade-major and late adjutant, Second Battalion, was killed, making a gallant stand when Brigade H.Q. became involved in the fighting.

Brig.-General R. H. Husey, D.S.O., M.C., London Rifle Brigade, was later in the day badly wounded and gassed and died a few days afterwards in German hands.

At this time the 8th Division had precisely seven 18-pdrs. of its own to cover its front.

Regarding the events of this day, May 28th, the 25th Brigade and Second Battalion diaries are silent except that the details and Transport appear to have been moved some twelve miles back to a wood north-west of Jonquery. The remains of the battalions of the brigade were still under the 75th Brigade, which at first held the line of the River Vesle, east of Jonchery,* with the 21st Division on its right and the 23rd Brigade on its left.

About 12 noon three Battalions of the 154th French Division, with some artillery, occupied in depth the high ground south of Brancourt with orders to hold the position to the last. Meanwhile, however, the enemy had pushed on strongly against the French and the 50th Division on the left, capturing Fismes (south of the Vesle) and forcing back the left of the 23rd Brigade.

Eventually, by evening, the 75th Brigade was holding a line east of Brancourt and facing north-west with French troops on each flank; further to the west the 23rd Brigade continued the line over the high ground just north-west of the Jonchery-Savigny road.

On May 29th a composite battalion was formed from details and stragglers and assembled at Champlat, under the command of Brig.-General G. W. St. G. Grogan, C.M.G., D.S.O., 23rd Brigade, and Major A. E. Wass, M.C., Lieutenant C. J. Eyston, five other officers and sixty other ranks went to form part of this unit which marched at 12 noon to Sarcy, arriving there at 3.0 p.m. and coming into divisional reserve.

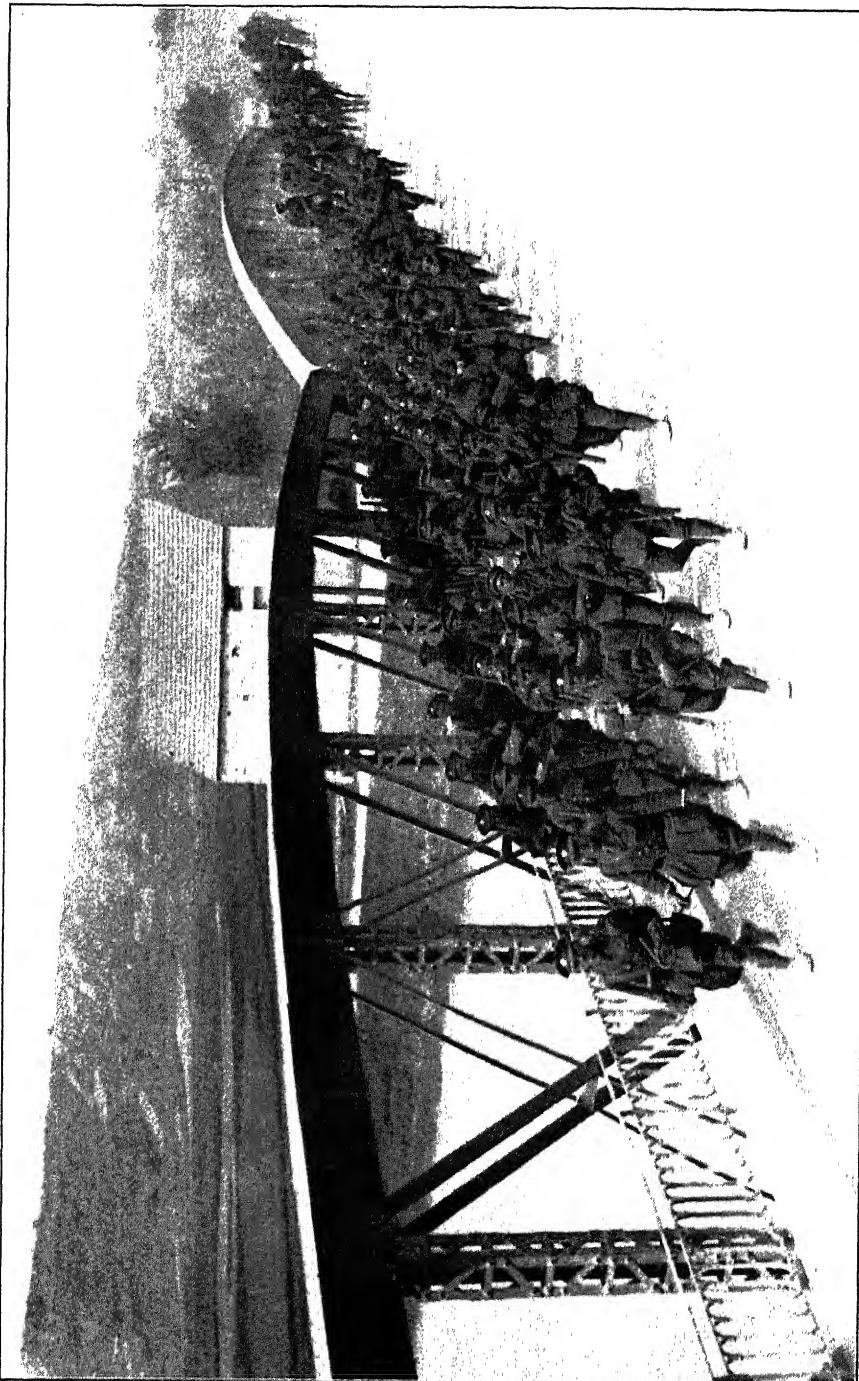
Meanwhile things had not been going well for the Allies, although reinforcements were coming up in the form of the 19th Division.

By 1.25 p.m. our troops and the French had been compelled to withdraw to the high ground between Courcelles and Faverolles, but the leading battalions of the 19th Division had come up and were digging in between Tramery and Lhery.

At about 4.0 p.m. the commander of the 154th French Division told G.O.C. 8th Division that the enemy had broken through the line at Lhery with tanks and the composite battalion was at once ordered to proceed thither to counter-attack. The rumour, however, proved to be false and the tanks to be French armoured cars. So the composite battalion returned to Sarcy.

At 5.0 p.m. the enemy attacked very heavily the positions north of Faverolles and Treslon and forced back our line to the spur north of Bouleuse.

* Not to be confused with Jonquery.



A REGIMENTAL DETACHMENT CROSSING OVER THE RIVER MARNE.
29th May, 1918.

Imperial War Museum—Copyright.

General Grogan was put in command of all the troops in this position. The line was held for two hours, but with difficulty, and it was the arrival of the composite battalion which temporarily restored the situation.*

That night the Allied line ran from north of Méry Premecy, north of Tramery and thence south-west to Lhery.

Casualties to the Second Battalion on this day were estimated at three officers and forty-seven other ranks.

This line was held until 12 noon on May 30th, when there was another withdrawal to near Sarcy.

In the meanwhile at 9.0 a.m. the 19th Division had taken over the front of the 8th Division and the latter disappeared from the battle. Not so those elements of the division already in the line, for these were taken over by the 19th Division, the Second Battalion party now consisting of some three officers and sixteen other ranks.

During the night French troops arrived and relieved the composite battalion, which thereupon moved to Chaumuzy and joined a brigade of the 19th Division. There it was ordered to move to Nanteuil to report to Colonel Feilding, attached 8th Division, and remained in that place during the 31st.

During these days the remnants of the 25th Brigade H.Q. with Transport and such few details as remained to it had moved southwards, crossed the River Marne at Port à Binson, and, by the 31st, had reached Grauves, south-east of Epernay, and were billeted in the village. Here, also, officially, was the Second Battalion—less detachments still numbering three officers and sixteen other ranks and Captain Boughton-Leigh's party.

† His party, it will be recalled, was sent up on the evening of the 27th to join the scratch force under the 75th Brigade. Unfortunately, the extreme fluidity of the battle-front at this time resulted in the party failing to find the 75th Brigade where it was expected to be. There followed several remarkable days. On more than one occasion the party found itself behind the German lines but managed to escape; at one time its commander placed himself under the orders of a French battalion commander who, expressing himself as delighted at the small reinforcement, placed it in support behind, and midway between, the two halves of his battalion. In the morning, however, the French had disappeared.

During its wanderings the chief nourishment of the party was champagne found in the cellars of deserted houses; the Germans also had found the same commodity, a fact which once led to the escape of the little band when surrounded, owing to the enemy's gait and eye being unsteady to a

* For his conduct on this occasion General Grogan received the Victoria Cross.

† From details supplied by Captain Boughton-Leigh.

degree which precluded marching, or shooting. Eventually the party found the Battalion Transport where it learnt that it was officially regarded as missing.

During the first days of June the IXth Corps formed various composite battalions including a 1/8th and 2/8th Battalions and on June 2nd Captain Boughton-Leigh and his party were sent up to join the latter which was in reserve about Courton Wood, south of Bligny. The party was not actively employed in repelling the last German attack on June 6th but, with all other parties of the 8th Division, was retained for the present by the 19th Division which on June 19th was relieved by the 8th Italian Division. For the British Army the Second Battle of the Aisne was over.

Before leaving the Second Battalion it may be mentioned here that the "official" Battalion remained in billets south of Epernay carrying out training, with what men is not mentioned, until June 13th, when it entrained at Fère Champenoise for Longpré, near Abbeville, and marched to billets at Hocquincourt. 2nd-Lieutenant W. H. Brann and thirteen other ranks had meanwhile on the 12th been returned by the 19th Division and, between the 17th and 19th, reinforcements of fourteen officers and six hundred and thirty-seven other ranks were received. On the latter date Captain Boughton-Leigh rejoined with his party from the 2/8th Composite Battalion, bringing with him four officers and his forty-nine other ranks.

THE SUMMER OF 1918.

AFTER THE GERMAN OFFENSIVES.

So far as the Rifle Brigade was concerned the last of the great German offensives of 1918 was over.

There remain to record the doings of the various Battalions until they were called upon successively to take their part in those great events which followed the passing of the initiative from German into Allied hands.

The First Battalion did not stay long at Gonnecourt as it was shelled out on the second day and went back to Busnettes. The whole summer

The First Battalion. was to be spent on this part of the front, tours in the line about Riez du Vinage and Pacaut Wood alternating with spells of six days' rest in Busnettes. A great deal of work was done in connecting posts by a continuous trench and in putting out wire. The enemy attempted to stop the latter work with machine-gun fire but failed to do so—a fact which was brought to his notice by the failure

THE BATTLE OF THE AISNE.

1918.



THE SECOND BATTALION. MOVEMENTS, 27th-31st May, 1918.

of a raid which he attempted, the raiders being held up by the wire and Lewis-gun fire.

Other incidents included the shelling on two occasions of Battalion H.Q., on the first of which the only casualties were amongst the Mess crockery, which suffered severely, and on the second a direct hit by a gas-shell caused some gas-casualties, chiefly in "I" Company near by.

On June 13th the Battalion became right battalion in the right brigade sector near La Pannerie. The next night the three right posts of "A" Company went forward to conform with a minor operation carried out by the 3rd Division on the right. In the early hours of the 15th No. 5749 Serjeant R. Cooke, M.M., and four others, on their own initiative, carried out a small daylight raid, capturing twenty prisoners and killing over twenty of the enemy; they were only stopped by a machine-gun which mortally wounded one of the party. Serjeant Cooke showed further coolness in getting the wounded man into our lines.*

Mention of the great influenza epidemic of 1918 occurs in the First Battalion record:—"During the last fortnight of June we were victims of a strange form of influenza. Nearly everyone was affected more or less seriously and about one hundred of the Battalion were evacuated sick."

On June 29th there appeared in the papers the award of the Victoria Cross to Serjeant Woodall, who was now no longer in the Battalion, having gone to England for a commission.

July passed in much the same fashion. Patrols from the battalions on the flanks were getting prisoners from isolated shell-hole posts "with irritating regularity as our patrols could find no one 'At Home.'" One suspected post was, however, marked down and carefully watched and found to be occupied by day only.

Accordingly at 6.20 a.m. on July 30th, 2nd-Lieutenant H. L. Routh with eight other ranks went out and rushed the post. They captured five of the enemy, of whom four surrendered immediately: the other had to be pulled out of a small shelter.

Casualties from April 26th to the end of July had been 2nd-Lieutenants F. H. Brown, J. H. Ainley and fifty-two other ranks killed, 2nd-Lieutenant J. H. L. Peirce and one hundred and thirty-seven other ranks wounded and one missing. There is no explanation for the high proportion of killed to wounded.

On August 3rd the First Battalion went back to Busnettes from the line

* For their gallantry on this occasion Serjeant Cooke, who already held the M.M. and Bar, was awarded the D.C.M., and Corporal Prangle and Riflemen Samuels and Symons the M.M.

and started reorganizing according to General Maxse's ideas the platoon becoming THE unit.*

On August 7th the enemy began withdrawing on this front.

**The Second
Battalion.**

The Second Battalion on June 22nd marched to Buigny and next day to Woignarue, two miles from the sea between Cayeux and Eu, where it continued intensive training and musketry. On the 26th eleven more officers joined and on the 29th Lieut.-Colonel R. H. Leyland arrived to assume command. During the month Brig.-General J. A. Pollok-McCall, C.M.G., D.S.O., assumed command of the 25th Brigade.

The sea-bathing here was much appreciated and the ranges on the shore were good, so each brigade was given a turn at this area. This led to the Battalion being moved on July 4th to Woincourt, some four miles further inland, and, on the 15th, to Montières, south-east of Gamaches on the River Bresle.

The period of training and recreation in this area came to an end on July 19th when the Battalion was railed to Pernes, in the First Army area, moving next day to a camp in Olhain Wood, south-east of Houdain.

On July 22nd the Battalion marched to Mont St. Eloy, where the 25th Brigade became corps reserve to General Hunter-Weston's VIIIth Corps. Here training continued † until August 5th, when the Battalion moved into support in Vimy village. On the last night of July the Battalion camp was shelled, causing a loss of five killed, seven wounded, and one horse killed.

Whilst in support, working-parties were found daily until on August 12th the Battalion took over the left sub-sector of the Acheville sector, east of Vimy. The usual trench routine followed until the 21st, when the Battalion was relieved in the left and took over the right sub-sector. Whilst there "A" Company's area was heavily gassed on the 23rd, some fifteen hundred rounds of Yellow Cross shell causing three officer and sixty-three other rank casualties.

On the 27th the Battalion was relieved by the 7th Bn. Somerset Light Infantry of the 20th Division and went out "without any orders as to what was going to take place." Moving by companies in lorries it reached Wood Camp, near Ecurie, between Arras and Neuville-St. Vaast, and, after a hot meal, there found itself support battalion in the Oppy sector; the 25th Brigade having moved from the north of the divisional line to the south.

* Since April, Lieut.-General Sir Ivor Maxse had been at the head of the Inspectorate of Training at G.H.Q.

† Under date July 25th the Diary records that the left-hand salute was officially abolished.



SERJEANT J. E. WOODALL, V.C.

On September 1st the Battalion took over the left sub-sector of the brigade front with "A" and "D" Companies in the outpost line in trenches north of Gavrelle with section observation posts out in front and "B" and "C" Companies holding the main line of defence from west of Gavrelle to east of Bailleul. The whole area was a maze of trenches but no attempt will be made to refer to them by name. Each morning patrols were sent out at dawn, seeing as a rule no sign of the enemy in the immediate front.

On September 5th a small party of the enemy attempted to enter the Battalion's lines but got away, leaving no prisoners; the same night "A" Company took over the whole of the outpost and main lines.

On the 11th, after various inter-company moves, "A" Company was withdrawn to camp behind Ecurie; this was in accordance with a decision of the 8th Division that one company of each battalion in front line should be withdrawn to rest.

About this time it appeared to the Higher Command probable that the enemy might withdraw from his present position to the Rovroy-Fresnes line or, possibly, to the Drocourt-Quéant line. Detailed orders were issued regarding the method of pursuit, which was to be carried out by bounds, but, as will be seen presently, there was not yet to be an opportunity of putting them into force.

On September 14th the Battalion was relieved and moved back by bus to Ecurie Wood camp, where it cleaned up, had baths, and did a little training until the 20th.

On September 21st the 25th Brigade attacked with a view to advancing its outpost line. At 11.0 p.m. the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. on the right and the 2nd Bn. East Lancashire Regt. on the left assaulted and made an advance to an average depth of six hundred yards, the Second Battalion being in reserve for the operation with H.Q. south of Bailleul. Unfortunately a counter-attack upon the division on the right, which was co-operating, forced the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire to give up some of its gains.

On the night of the 22nd, however, the latter battalion again attacked and was completely successful, capturing one officer, thirty-five men, and five machine-guns.

The next night, September 23rd, the Second Battalion took over the captured position in the right sub-sector. Owing to heavy rain the trenches were in very bad condition and the Battalion lost that night two other ranks killed and 2nd-Lieutenants J. A. S. Jackson, E. J. Witherden and fifteen other ranks wounded. But worse was to follow for, at 5.15 a.m.,

on the 24th, the Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Colonel R. H. Leyland, was killed by a shell whilst going round the line.

Rex Hamilton Leyland was the son of F. D. Leyland and was born on January 23rd, 1885. He went to Harrow and joined the Fourth Battalion in 1905. After service in Malta and Egypt he was invalided home with malaria and dysentery and in June, 1914, was placed on half-pay owing to ill-health. On the outbreak of war he rejoined the active list and served at the War Office, Grantham, and G.H.Q., France, being concerned chiefly with machine-guns—a weapon with which he was an expert—and in May, 1918, was posted to command of the Second Battalion.

Although in indifferent health he never spared himself and was most energetic. A good horseman and a keen sportsman, he won the Heavy Weight Cup at the Regimental Point-to-Point Races, 1910.

He was buried on the 26th at Roclincourt, the Divisional and Brigade Commanders attending the funeral.

— Captain C. E. Squire, M.C., assumed command.

On the 27th a "Chinese Attack" took place * with the addition of raising dummy figures in front of the trenches; no very apparent results are recorded.

The weather remained bad until the end of the month, making work almost impossible: patrolling showed that the enemy was still there.

On October 1st the 25th Brigade took over the left sub-sector of the Greenland sector from the 154th Brigade 51st Division; the Second Battalion relieving the 1/4th Bn. Seaforth Highlanders in this sub-sector; "B" Company, in front line, occupying a portion of the old German front line south-east of Gavrelle with the remaining companies in depth south of the village.

On the 2nd the enemy was reported to be blowing up buildings and making craters in the roads and divisions to the north were moving forward. The enemy opposite the 8th Division front, however, was there yet, as was proved by the experience of daily and nightly patrols.

On October 3rd there were three officer and forty-four other rank casualties, some, apparently, caused by gas, and on that day Lieut.-Colonel Hon. R. Brand, D.S.O., assumed command of the Battalion.

On October 4th many fires and explosions were observed behind the enemy's lines, but he was still there on the 5th.

* Vide page 87, footnote, Vol. II.

On the 6th orders were received to take part next day in an attack on the Rouvroy-Fresnes line.

On this day Colonel Brand was appointed to the command of the 25th Brigade and Major J. K. V. Brown (attached East Lancashire Regiment) was appointed to command the Second Battalion.*

The Third
Battalion.

The Third Battalion remained at Cayeux until April 17th, receiving reinforcements of eleven officers and three hundred and forty-seven other ranks. After a night at Woincourt it entrained on the 18th for Pernes-Camblain and marched to Ostreville, three miles north-east of St. Pol, where training was continued until the end of the month, by which time a further seventeen officers and thirty-two other ranks had joined the Battalion.

On May 1st and 2nd a move was made, by stages, into divisional reserve at Bully-Grenay.

Until the 18th the Battalion was finding working-parties ; on the 5th the wearing of "shorts" began, on the 10th thirteen officers and one hundred and seven other ranks went to the Divisional Wing of the Corps Reinforcement Camp for rest and training, the personnel to be changed each Thursday, and on the 13th the Battalion moved to Les Brebis. On the 18th the Third Battalion went into the line in the northern sub-sector of the brigade front, being disposed in depth south-east and south of Loos. On the 30th the Battalion returned to Les Brebis.

The Third Battalion was destined to remain on this part of the front during the whole summer, occupying alternately the north and south sub-sectors of the brigade front and resting in Les Brebis.

On June 13th three Germans dressed in British uniform crept up to a forward post and captured two Riflemen. On the same day began the influenza epidemic "which eventually reached serious proportions." This was no under-statement for, by the end of the month, twelve officers and four hundred and ten other ranks had been admitted to hospital for this cause ; as a set-off six officers and one hundred and one other ranks joined the Battalion.

During June Brig.-General G. Thorpe, C.M.G., D.S.O., succeeded General Stone in command of the 17th Brigade.

July must have been an unsatisfactory month ; patrols were sent out nightly, and one small raid was attempted but no prisoners were secured and the Battalion lost Lieutenants F. D. Adams, died of wounds, and R. Ruddle, M.C., killed ; 2nd-Lieutenants C. C. Macdonald and E. K. Cross wounded, with eleven other rank casualties. For their good work in

* Colonel Brand had commanded the Second Battalion since February, 1916.

bringing in two wounded officers, No. 48001 A/Corporal W. H. Letty and S/35379 Rfn. F. Humphrey were awarded the Military Medal.

During August patrolling was still unproductive and resulted in the loss of 2nd-Lieutenant R. C. Wright missing and some ten other casualties.

In the early hours of the 11th a disastrous aerial torpedo fell upon the Quartermaster's Stores in Les Brebis, killing six men and wounding eight.

During the month the Battalion was 2nd in the Grand Aggregate in the First Army Rifle Meeting and, in the Divisional Cross-Country run, C.Q.M.S. Dalton was 1st and A/Corporal Wheeler 3rd out of ninety runners; in the VIIIth Corps Sports they were, respectively, 1st and 2nd, whilst in the Divisional 440 Yards, R.S.-M. Sandy and 2nd-Lieutenant J. L. Holmes were 1st and 2nd.

Events in September call for no comment as the same somewhat monotonous routine continued until the 30th, when the Battalion left the Loos sector, for ever, and went into camp at Froissart near Hersin.

On October 1st the Third Battalion entrained for Bouquemaison, north of Doullens, marched to billets in Ivergny and, next day, returned to Bouquemaison. There it remained until the 6th, when it moved by rail to Hermies, west of Havrincourt, and thence by road to dug-outs and bivouacs in the neighbourhood of Graincourt, whence it would move to take active part in the closing scenes of the War.

The 20th Division. On April 2nd Major-General G. S. Carey, C.B., succeeded General Douglas Smith in command of the 20th Division and, about the same time, Brig.-General R. M. Ovens, C.M.G., replaced General Hyslop in the 59th Brigade.

The Eleventh Battalion remained at Selincourt until April 10th, when it began a march, which on the 12th finished at Béthencourt-sur-Mer (three miles inland from Ault between Cayeux and Le Tréport). By this time reinforcements of four officers and six hundred and ninety-three other ranks had joined the Battalion, but of the latter three hundred and forty-five were sent back to the XVIIIth Corps Reinforcement Camp for further training, leaving the Battalion with a "ration strength" of seven hundred and twenty. Until the 17th training was carried out whilst seven more officers joined on the 15th. On the 18th the Battalion moved to Tinques, east of St. Pol, where it remained until the end of the month. On the 22nd, Lieut.-Colonel D. W. C. Davies-Evans, Pembroke Yeomanry, joined and assumed command.

* The Twelfth Battalion moved on April 6th from Revelles to Dromesnil.

* It will be more convenient to take the Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions alternately month by month.

near Selincourt, Lieut.-Colonel J. P. Breckon rejoining on the march and assuming command from Lieutenant H. G. S. Lorimer, who became adjutant.

On the 8th a draft of four hundred and seventy-one other ranks arrived, consisting mainly of 18½-year-old boys and a number of untrained men from the Army Veterinary Corps.

Leaving Dromesnil on the 10th, the Battalion, on the 11th, was established in six different villages in the Maigneville area, east of Gamaches. On the 14th two hundred and eighty other ranks were sent to the Corps Reinforcement Camp for training and by the 17th thirteen officers had joined. On the 18th the Battalion moved by bus to Aubigny, between St. Pol and Arras, and marched to Estrée-Cauchie, four miles to the north. Here training continued until the end of the month; two attempts to play off the second round of the Brigade Inter-Company Football failed, the supply of balls running out owing to the robust nature of the games.

During the month ten Military Medals were awarded.

At the beginning of May the 20th Division took over the Avion and Lens sectors of the front, having on its left the 24th Division, in which was the Third Battalion, and, like that division, was to spend the entire summer in this distasteful area. The 60th Brigade was on the right in the Avion sector and the 61st in the Lens sector on the left. The 59th Brigade was in reserve. The 20th Division was in the VIIIth Corps.

On May 2nd the Eleventh Battalion moved to Souchez and, the same day, Colonel Davies-Evans left to command another battalion, Major Hon. M. T. Boscawen, D.S.O., M.C., assuming command.

On the 10th the Battalion went into the left sub-sector of the Lens sector, the 59th Brigade relieving the 61st. The month was uneventful, the Battalion doing tours in both the Lens and Avion sectors with spells in support and reserve in Hirondelles Wood, Liévin and Carency. There was the usual patrol activity and one small raid was attempted.

Casualties during the month were one other rank died of wounds; 2nd-Lieutenants A. T. Robertson, E. G. Mayhew, R. U. Fisher and forty-nine other ranks wounded or gassed. Two Military Crosses and one D.C.M. were awarded during May. On May 30th Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Cotton, D.S.O., returned to command the Battalion and Major Boscawen left for the Eighth Battalion.

On May 2nd the Twelfth Battalion took over the right sub-sector of the Avion sector and remained there until the 14th. Much patrol work had disappointing results and the Battalion moved into brigade support in Hirondelles Wood. Whilst there "D" Company attempted a raid with

two officers (2nd Lieutenants O. C. Venus and Berkely) and forty-two other ranks ; the party came under artillery and machine-gun fire and 2nd Lieutenant Venus (twice) and four other ranks were wounded.

On the 20th the 60th Brigade was relieved by the 59th and the Twelfth Battalion went to Souchez for the remainder of the month. Other casualties included 2nd-Lieutenants B. J. C. Hammerton and R. H. Walpole wounded and some twenty-one other rank casualties. During May one D.S.O. was awarded, three M.C.s, one Bar to M.C. and two D.C.M.s.

The Eleventh Battalion has little to say about itself for June. From the 1st to the 7th the 59th Brigade was in corps reserve in camp at Carency when the Battalion became left battalion in the Lens sector. Thereafter visits to Liévin and Souchez occurred before the 17th, when it again became left battalion but, this time, in the Avion sector. On the 19th there was a change in dispositions, the 59th Brigade having all three battalions in line, each disposed in depth with the Eleventh Battalion on the left. From the 26th to the 30th it was in corps reserve in camp at Souchez.

About the 27th "an epidemic of four-day fever breaks out."

In the Twelfth Battalion on June 3rd, 2nd-Lieutenant J. B. Gordon-Duff was wounded whilst on patrol and on the 4th a raid was attempted. Once more results were disappointing as no identification could be obtained owing to the enemy retiring hurriedly. Thereafter rifle and rifle-grenade fire wounded the two officers and several N.C.O.s. C.S.-M. Whitmore of "B" Company took command and bombed a dug-out, but no enemy could be found. The party returned having lost 2nd-Lieutenants J. Clemo, J. Stevenson and thirty-two other ranks wounded (of whom one died) and four missing. C.S.-M. Whitmore and the padre, Captain Lewis, did excellent work in bringing in all the wounded.

Next day, June 5th, the Battalion moved back to Hirondelles Wood, where it stayed until the 11th, when it returned to the line.

On the 17th, on relief, the Battalion moved back by train to Ablain St. Nazaire, some three miles south-west of Liévin, where it remained training until the 26th, when it returned to the line. The remainder of the month was quiet. During the month Colonel Breckon was awarded the D.S.O.*

For July there is little to record of either the Eleventh or Twelfth Battalion. Each did tours in the line with a period behind at Souchez or Ablain St. Nazaire for training. Heavy rain adversely affected both trenches and training. There was great aerial activity during the month.

* During June, Brig.-General W. R. H. Dunn, D.S.O., succeeded General Duncan and Brig.-General A. C. Baylay, D.S.O., General Ovens in the 60th and 59th Brigades, respectively.

several enemy machines being brought down on the divisional front, either in front of or behind our lines. Gas was discharged on several occasions, either by gas "beam" or from projectors, but the effect on the enemy is not recorded.

Both Battalions were very strong at this time with a paper strength of nearly fifty officers apiece and some nine hundred men.

On August 3rd the Eleventh Battalion went from Ablain St. Nazaire into the line in the Lens sector. On the 7th, 2nd-Lieutenant F. H. Buchan was, unhappily, killed by a shell.

On the 10th No. 7 Platoon of "B" Company, under Lieutenant C. W. Stonham, carried out a highly successful raid.

Zero was at 2.30 a.m. and from 11.30 p.m. to 12 midnight a strong concentration of artillery put down a barrage to give the impression that a raid was in progress. At zero the platoon advanced on its objective, a railway embankment and the defences on the far side of it, under cover of smoke, and five minutes later the artillery opened a further bombardment for twenty-five minutes. The raid was a complete success and the platoon returned with two prisoners, having suffered no casualty. For his conduct on this occasion No. 3036 Serjeant Mitchell was subsequently awarded the Military Medal.

On August 11th the Battalion came out of the Lens sector and, next night, went into the line in the Avion sector; on the 18th one battalion was withdrawn from the line and, consequently, the Battalion took over part of Avion village from the 11th Bn. 60th.

On the 28th it went back to Ablain St. Nazaire.

The Twelfth Battalion began August well, a patrol under Lieutenant B. W. Hall capturing one and killing two of the enemy, for which the officer was later rewarded with the Military Cross.

Until the 12th the Battalion remained in the Avion sector and then moved back to Ablain St. Nazaire until the 14th, when it moved to a camp on the Souchez-Carency road. Training, including field firing, continued here until the 22nd. Meanwhile, in consequence of a general side-slipping to the right, the 20th Division had taken over the Méricourt sector from the 8th Division * and it was to this sector that the Twelfth Battalion then moved and in which it remained until the end of the month.

The Eleventh Battalion remained at Ablain St. Nazaire until September

* Vide page 310 for movements of the Second Battalion at this time.

6th, when it went into the right sub-sector of the Avion sector. The tour lasted until the 24th, and must have been a very quiet spell as the total casualties for the month are recorded as four wounded and one missing.

From then to the end of September the Eleventh Battalion was in brigade reserve at Ablain St. Nazaire and on the 30th had a strength of fifty-one officers and one thousand and nineteen other ranks.

For the Twelfth Battalion, on the contrary, September was to be far from quiet.

In the right sub-sector of the Méricourt sector the enemy made an ineffectual raid which was driven off, but on the night of the 4th/5th September he delivered a concentrated bombardment of mustard gas and H.E. which continued from 11.45 p.m. to 3.0 a.m. The effect of the gas began to be felt about 8.0 a.m. on the 5th "and from then onwards casualties began to stream down and continued to do so for the rest of the day."*

As a result of these casualties the Battalion was relieved on September 6th and went into camp at Carencey. On the 7th, Major G. W. Liddell, D.S.O., second-in-command, left to command the First Battalion.

On the 14th the Battalion went into the Méricourt (left) sub-sector and remained there, without great incident, until the end of the month. And here it will be convenient to leave the two Battalions in the 20th Division.

**The Thirteenth
Battalion.**

On May 9th the Thirteenth Battalion was relieved in the line at Bucquoy and went into billets at Souastre until the 13th, when it relieved the 13th Bn. 60th in trenches and dug-outs at Essarts. The 111th Brigade was at this time in divisional reserve. On the 17th the 111th Brigade was relieved by the 187th Brigade, 62nd Division, and the Thirteenth Battalion went into camp at Authie, being now in IVth Corps Reserve. Training was undertaken here until the 30th, when the Battalion, the 37th Division being now in G.H.Q. Reserve, moved up into trenches in what was known as the "Purple Line" between Sailly-au-Bois and Hebuterne.

On June 4th the Battalion was relieved by a battalion of the 3rd New Zealand Brigade and, after a day in camp in the Bois du Warnimont, started on a three weeks' cruise, which must have been a pleasant interlude.

Moving by 'bus on the night of June 5th it arrived next morning at

* Casualties in the Twelfth Battalion on this night from gas alone appear to number eleven officers and over three hundred other ranks.

Bovelles, some seven miles west of Amiens and, later, marched to Guignemicourt near by. The 37th Division was now in the XXIIInd Corps, Fourth Army, and in G.H.Q. Reserve.* Thereafter there were successive moves on the 10th by 'bus to Rumigny, five miles south of Amiens, on the 15th by a march of less than two miles to Sains-en-Amienois, in support to the First French Army, and on the 19th again by march-route to Nampty on the River Selle. Full use was made of the river and aquatic sports were held but, on the night of the 21st, the Battalion entrained at Loeuilly for Mondicourt and thence marched to Hénu. By morning of the 25th the Battalion was back in the line south of—Bucquoy!—where it finished the month.

On June 26th notification was received of the awards of the Victoria Cross to Serjeant Gregg, D.C.M., M.M., and Rifleman Beesley, and, during the month, four Military Crosses were awarded, two D.C.M.s and no fewer than twenty-four M.M.s.

For July the Thirteenth Battalion has little to record. A spell in rest billets at Souastre from the 3rd to the 7th, then six days in the line north of Bucquoy; from the 14th to the 26th in support at Essarts and in reserve in Pigeon Wood and then back to the line south of Bucquoy.

Since going into the line on June 25th casualties had been 2nd-Lieutenant R. C. Cook and nine other ranks killed, or died of wounds, and 2nd-Lieutenant A. B. Smith and twenty-six other ranks wounded.

From August 1st to the 9th the Battalion remained in the line with H.Q. at Rettemoy Farm, which received considerable attention from enemy field-guns and howitzers. Much good work was done in reconnoitring enemy positions and movements and five congratulatory messages were received from the G.O.C. Division on work done by patrols. On relief the Battalion went into billets in Souastre, where a very successful rifle meeting was held.

On the night of August 17th the Battalion went into the support line at Essarts.

This completes the record of the fighting Battalions of the Rifle Brigade during the summer of 1918, the story of each being brought up to the eve of its first appearance in the final great struggle which was to end the War.

But before turning to that some mention must be made of the four gallant Battalions—the Seventh, Eighth, Ninth and Sixteenth—which,

* This was in accordance with an arrangement whereby the three divisions of the XXIIInd Corps were to be behind the junction of the French and British Armies. By June 19th fresh French reserve divisions had been collected and the divisions of the XXIIInd Corps were sent to the Third and Fourth British Armies, the 37th Division returning to the Third.

through no fault of their own, had been relegated to the ancillary work of training cadres.

The Seventh,
Eighth and Ninth
Battalions cease to
exist.

On April 28th the Seventh Battalion training cadre moved to Lisbourg and next day to Fressin, north of Hesdin, where the training staff underwent specialist instruction. On May 2nd it moved to Embry in the same area and continued the same work until the 15th, when it moved to Boeseghem and thence on the 18th to Les Ciseaux in the Aire area.

On the 26th sports, a dinner and a concert were held to commemorate the third anniversary of the Battalion's landing in France, the actual date being May 19th.

During the month five Military Crosses were awarded, one D.C.M. and three M.M.s.

The Seventh Battalion kept no diary after May. In the middle of June orders were received for the greater part of the 14th Division to proceed to England. Thus the remains of the Seventh Battalion sailed from Boulogne and arriving at Brookwood at 7.0 p.m. on June 17th went into camp at Pirbright.

That day the Seventh Battalion was transferred to the 43rd Brigade and, becoming the 33rd London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers), ceased to exist after its three honourable years of war.

By May 2nd the Eighth Battalion training cadre also was at Embry and on the 15th left for Steenbecque, near Aire, where it took over, for administration, a composite battalion of troops from six different Irish regiments. Here it was employed at work on the Lillers-Steenbecque defence line until June 10th, when one company per day was left in camp for training. Enemy night-bombing was most active and long-range guns occasionally fired on back areas.

During this period Lieut.-Colonel D. E. Prideaux-Bruno, D.S.O., was awarded a Bar to the D.S.O., whilst Major F. E. Young received the M.C. and No. 5415 R.S.-M. W. Warren the D.C.M.

On June 16th the 14th Division departed, leaving the Eighth and Ninth Battalions and the 8th and 9th Bns. 60th behind.

The same routine continued, the Battalion diary remarking on the 20th: "Quite a lot of fever about." On the 26th the training staff of the 7/8th Bn. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers relieved that of the Eighth Battalion and the latter went to Berneuilles in the Samer area and came under the 34th Division.

Here it undertook the training of the 318th Infantry Regiment of the

80th American Division until July 3rd, when the latter left for the Third Army area.

There is nothing to record for July, beyond daily training of the specialist staff, and, on August 2nd, orders arrived for the disbandment of the Battalion. The commanding officer was to join the C.O.s' pool at Etaples and the training staff the Eleventh Battalion.

That night Sergeant Ball left for the Base at Rouen, bearing the Records of the Eighth Battalion, which was now no more.

The Ninth Battalion on May 2nd moved to Sempy and on the 22nd to Royon, both places being east of Montreuil-sur-Mer; the time was spent in training the specialist staff. During June there were two moves in the direction of Calais, but by the 12th the Battalion was back at Royon, whence on the 19th it moved to Carly, nearer Calais. On the 28th it was attached to the 117th Brigade, 39th Division.

From June 22nd to July 3rd the Ninth Battalion appears to have been training troops of the American E.F., but of what formation no record exists.

Of the remainder of July there is nothing to be said and Vol. 40, the final, War Diary of the Ninth Battalion closes abruptly with the entry for July 31st—"Training."

By May 23rd some two hundred and seventy other ranks of the Sixteenth

*The Sixteenth
Battalion as a
Training Cadre.* Battalion had been dispatched to the Base and at the end of the month the Battalion in its reduced form was at Windal, some eight miles west of St. Omer. There it remained throughout June, affiliated to and training the

Regimental H.Q. Company and the 2nd Bn. 117th Infantry Regiment, American E.F.

On the 26th No. 461 T/R.S.-M. W. J. Mash, D.C.M., performed an act of courage for which he was subsequently awarded the M.S.M. Whilst superintending a class of American soldiers in the firing of live rifle-grenades he saw that an accident was imminent; by seizing a rifle and grenade and flinging them out of the trench he saved several men from death or injury and, in doing so, was himself slightly wounded.

July was spent in the same way until the 25th, when the cadre returned to Recques and came under command of the Brigadier 117th Brigade on the 26th.

On August 15th the cadre moved by rail to the L.-of-C. Area and joined the Infantry Camp at Abancourt, six miles south of Aumale, until the 23rd, when it moved to Quesnes, four miles south-west of that town.

Here the Sixteenth Battalion cadre came under the orders of the 199th Brigade, 66th Division, having left the 117th Brigade for good and the 39th Division for the present.

And now the time has come when must be recorded the parts played successively by the fighting Battalions of the Regiment in those operations to be known, collectively, as the "Final Advance."

CHAPTER XI

THE FINAL ADVANCE.*

THIS record is not concerned with the operations known as the Second Battle of the Marne which, beginning on June 7th, concluded during the first days of August.

Nor is it concerned with the first great offensive action undertaken by the British Armies, that of the Fourth Army on August 8th, for there was no Battalion of the Regiment in that army. The sequence of events is related in Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch, to which reference should be made for a general understanding of Sir Douglas Haig's and Marshal Foch's strategy.†

The first unit of the Regiment to be involved in the final stage of the War was the First Battalion.

The First
Battalion.
The enemy
Withdrawal.

‡ Whilst the First Battalion was resting in Busnettes the enemy began to withdraw on August 5th from his forward positions all along the front of the 4th Division.

On August 9th the 11th Brigade relieved the 10th in the line and the First Battalion took over the outpost line on the whole brigade front, which was in a line of shell-holes from near Bohème, behind the Hinges road, to the Turbeaute stream and thence behind that stream for some one thousand yards northwards. Colonel Fellowes was now advanced guard commander to the brigade and had under his orders an 18-pdr. battery with machine-guns and light trench-mortars. "I" Company was on the right with "C" on the left, the other two companies being in support.

It was decided to establish the line of the Turbeaute River and the Hinges road and by the afternoon of the 10th "C" Company had established posts across the stream: "I" Company, however, on the right had more difficulty and it was not until the 11th that posts were established beyond the Hinges road and that line itself held. During this time enemy machine-

* Map will be found facing p. 354.

† Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch dated December 21st, 1918. Supplement to the London Gazette, dated January 7th, 1919.

‡ Map will be found facing p. 288.

guns and snipers had been active but artillery fire was chiefly on Quentin village, which contained no troops.

On the 11th the Battalion captured a prisoner of the 102nd German R.I.R.—a valuable identification which confirmed the “side-slipping” of this regiment southwards.

On the 12th the Battalion was relieved and went into support in the old front and reserve lines where six days were spent resting, training and clearing the old German forward area of salvage. In his diary Colonel Fellowes comments on the fact that over a hundred German corpses were found and buried, “a fact which showed how slack the enemy had become in matters of discipline and decency.”

On the night of August 18th/19th the Battalion returned to the line.

Until 7 a.m. on the 19th enemy snipers and machine-guns were still active; then fire suddenly ceased and patrols immediately went out and established a line one hundred and fifty yards west of Paradis road and, at 1.30 p.m., a further advance was made to the east of the road. The next day, the 20th, the line was again advanced a further nine hundred yards, but the enemy offered far more resistance and, the casualties becoming fairly heavy, the order was given to dig in and hold on. Orders from above were that “slight opposition would be overcome” but that heavy casualties were not to be incurred.

On the evening of August 20th the Battalion was relieved and went into support, moving on the 22nd back to Busnettes, where it “heard definitely that we were going back for a month or so of intensive training.”

How this information proved to be false will be related in due course.

During this tour the First Battalion had had 2nd-Lieutenant C. J. C. Schuster and ten other ranks killed, Major C. F. C. Letts, Captain V. J. Wheeler, 2nd-Lieutenants S. H. Burch, E. C. Garton, E. J. Freear, R. D. Winslow and eighty-two other ranks wounded, with two missing.

Leaving the First Battalion, attention must be turned to events elsewhere in which the Thirteenth Battalion was to play a notable part. The reasons which decided Sir Douglas Haig in his next move are detailed in his Despatch.*

THE BATTLE OF BAPAUME.

† The initial attack of this battle was in the nature of a preliminary operation and was carried out by the IVth and VIth Corps of the Third Army,

* Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch dated December 21st, 1918. Supplement to the London Gazette dated January 7th, 1919.

† Map will be found facing p. 326.

the 37th Division being on the left of the former corps with the 111th Brigade as its left brigade.

The Thirteenth
Battalion.
Ablainzevelle and
Favreuil.
August 21st-26th,
1918.

On the night of August 20th/21st the Thirteenth Battalion moved forward from Essarts to the front-line trenches opposite Ablainzevelle, preparatory to the attack, being the left battalion of the 11th Brigade with the 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers on its right and the 2nd Division of the VIth Corps on its left.

The objective for the Battalion was a line running from north-east to south-west on the east side of Ablainzevelle and the orders were to take the trenches in front, to sweep round the north side of the village and to consolidate on the objective line distant seventeen hundred yards from the right and two thousand yards from the left.

At zero hour (4.55 a.m.) on August 21st there was a dense mist and, when the barrage opened, it was scarcely possible to see more than fifty yards. A good knowledge of the ground, however, enabled the Battalion to get forward and to reach the objective with little trouble and few casualties.

Tanks and aeroplanes were to have co-operated, but the mist caused the former to lose direction and entirely prevented the use of the latter.

The order of advance was "D" and "B" Companies in front, the latter on the left, "A" in support and "C" in reserve; by 7.20 a.m. a message was received that companies had reached their objective and were consolidating.

According to plan the 63rd (R.N.) Division passed through the 37th Division to the attack of Logeast Wood and Achiet-le-Grand; the former was captured but the high ground west of the railway held up the assault and, at the end of the day, the line ran east of Logeast Wood.

The following day the front line was reconnoitred by officers and others with a view to a further advance.

On the night August 22nd/23rd orders were received for the 37th Division to take Achiet-le-Grand and Bihucourt, a position of great natural strength, which it was known that the defenders had been ordered to hold at all costs.

The 111th Brigade was to attack with the 13th Bn. 60th on the right, the Thirteenth Battalion on the left and the 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers in support, all of whom were in position by the early hours of the 23rd. Zero was not until 11.0 a.m., at which hour, under cover of a heavy barrage, the brigade advanced over the hill and down a slope for fifteen hundred yards.

By 11.30 a.m. the position had been won after a fierce struggle on the

railway embankment where the enemy had massed heavy and light machine-guns besides light field-guns and trench-mortars ; the success was due to the speed of the attack surprising the enemy.

By 1.0 p.m. the Battalion had consolidated a line one thousand yards east of the railway and was pushing on towards Bihucourt, which, by 2.15 p.m., had been taken and a line consolidated east of the village.

In this action the Thirteenth Battalion took some five hundred prisoners, forty heavy and seventy light machine-guns, twenty trench-mortars, ten anti-tank guns, one 4.2-cm. How., one 77-mm. gun and a quantity of stores, material and equipment.

As a result of this attack the enemy line formed an acute salient projecting into our front and it was now decided to reduce this salient.

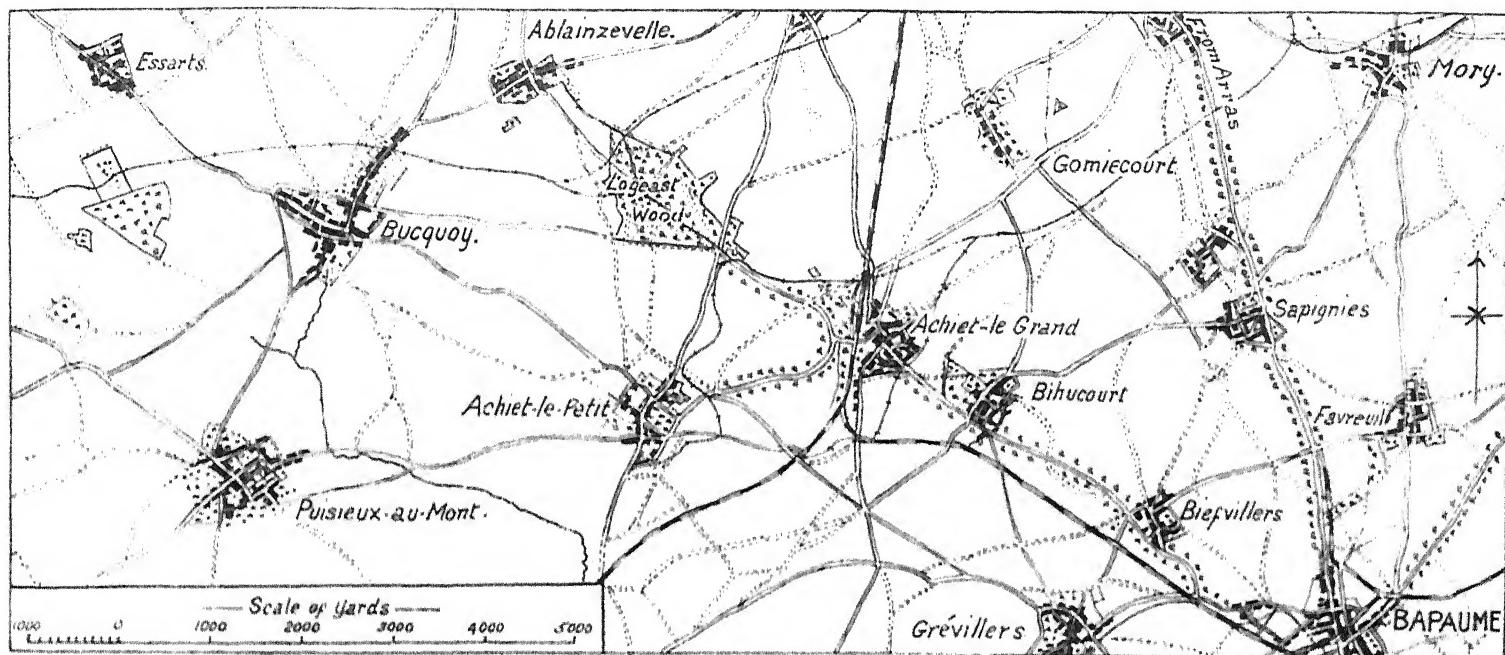
Accordingly, at 4.0 a.m. on August 24th, orders were received to move forward and occupy the high ground north of Biefvillers and north-east of Bihucourt ; this was duly done and, by 7.0 a.m. on the 25th, the line had been straightened out. Having received orders to exploit this success the Battalion sent out strong patrols which, crossing the Arras-Bapaume road south of Sapignies, moved on Favreuil. By 2.0 p.m. the high ground immediately west of that village was held by patrols which were in touch with troops of the New Zealand Division who were advancing on the right to the attack of Favreuil. By the evening, however, the New Zealanders had not taken Favreuil and the 111th Brigade was ordered to combine with them in a further attack on the village. Zero hour was fixed for 6.30 p.m. and the brigade was to attack with the Thirteenth Battalion on the right, 13th Bn. 60th on the left and 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers in support.

About 6.0 p.m., as the battalions were moving to their places of assembly, which in the case of the Thirteenth Battalion was under cover of some banks eight hundred yards west of Favreuil, the enemy put down a heavy barrage in front of the village and on the valley by which the attack would advance. The attack, nevertheless, started punctually whilst, at the same time, large numbers of the enemy were seen emerging from Favreuil to counter-attack. The opposing forces clashed midway and in a few minutes four hundred Germans had laid down their arms and, five minutes later, the Thirteenth Battalion was entering the southern half of the village.

Meanwhile the 60th on the left were held up by machine-gun fire from the north-west outskirts of the village and a company of the support battalion went to their assistance, whilst the Thirteenth Battalion pushed on through the village, taking prisoners and machine-guns, until it reached its objective, a trench one hundred and fifty yards east of the village. A defensive flank

THE BATTLE OF BAPAUME.

1918.



THE THIRTEENTH BATTALION. ABLAINZEVILLE AND FAVREUIL.

21st-26th August, 1918.

was then formed by the 60th and the Royal Fusiliers, the line running west through the centre of the village and then continuing northwards from a point about two hundred yards west of the village. During the night patrols from all three battalions cleared the northern half of the village and, by 4.0 a.m. on the 26th, the 111th Brigade had secured the whole of its objective.

Within the hour the 2nd Bn. K.O.S.B.s had taken over the line, the 5th Division relieving the 37th, and the weary but victorious troops of the 111th Brigade moved back to Logeast Wood.

In five days the 111th Brigade had covered fourteen thousand yards, fighting practically all the way, and had taken over two thousand prisoners from four different divisions (of which one was the 111th). During the fighting on the 25th/26th the Thirteenth Battalion took some four hundred prisoners, of whom a number had "Gibraltar" on the sleeves of their tunics.*

Unfortunately a high price in casualties was paid for these successes. Between August 21st and 26th the Thirteenth Battalion lost Captain F. W. L. Gull, 2nd-Lieutenants R. Turnbull, M.C., G. B. Spencer, J. K. Ferrier and forty-six other ranks killed; 2nd-Lieutenants N. J. Willey, D.C.M., W. Brock, A. L. Hutchings, P. S. Neylan, W. T. Kerruish, A. A. B. McDonald, J. U. Laing and two hundred and fifty-two other ranks wounded.

The Battalion remained in huts at Logeast Wood until September 3rd and was not called upon to take further part in the Battle of Bapaume.

THE BATTLE OF THE SCARPE.

On August 25th the First Army attacked between the River Sensée and the River Scarpe with the Third Army closely supporting its right. Wancourt, Guémappe and Monchy-le-Preux were captured and the line advanced to the east of those places. The next day the attack continued on both sides of the River Scarpe; Chérisy, Vis-en-Artois and the Bois du Sart being taken as well as Roeux and Gavrelle.

In the succeeding stage of the advance the First Battalion was to be employed.

On August 23rd the Battalion marched to Faucquenhem, south-

* Three Hanoverian regiments, La Mothe's, Reden's and Hardenberg's, took part in the Siege of Gibraltar (1779-1783), being leased by the Elector of Hanover to himself as George III of England. These eventually became the 10th (Hanoverian) Jäger, 73rd (Hanoverian) Fusiliers, and 79th Infantry Regiments and were permitted, by order of the Kaiser in 1901, to wear the distinction "Gibraltar."

In his book, "The Storm of Steel," Lieutenant Junger describes the move of his regiment, the 73rd Hanoverian Fusiliers, up to the front to counter-attack on August 25th-26th. He himself was wounded in Favreuil but escaped capture. It would, therefore, appear reasonable to assume that the Thirteenth Battalion's prisoners belonged to Lieutenant Junger's regiment.

west of Lillers; on the 25th it moved by rail from Lillers to Bryas and thence by road to Foufflin-Ricametz, south-east of St. Pol, and at 5.30 p.m. on the 26th marched to Villers-au-Bois, seven miles north-west of Arras, which it reached at 1.0 a.m. on the 27th.

On the 28th the Battalion moved again, this time by 'bus, to just south of Blangy Lock, east of Arras, whence it moved in artillery formation west of Orange Hill, across the Monchy plateau, keeping the village on the left, down to the old British front line of March, 1918.

It was very dark but a German light railway proved invaluable as a guide and the Battalion was eventually disposed with "A" and "I" Companies in the old German front line and support system with the other two companies in the old British system.

On the evening of the 29th the Battalion relieved a portion of the 1st Bn. Somerset Light Infantry on the River Sensée, north-west of Eterpigny; the relief not being complete until 5.0 a.m. on the 30th owing to gas-shelling and the darkness of the night. Companies were disposed, "A" on the right, "I" on the left, with "B" and "C" in support.

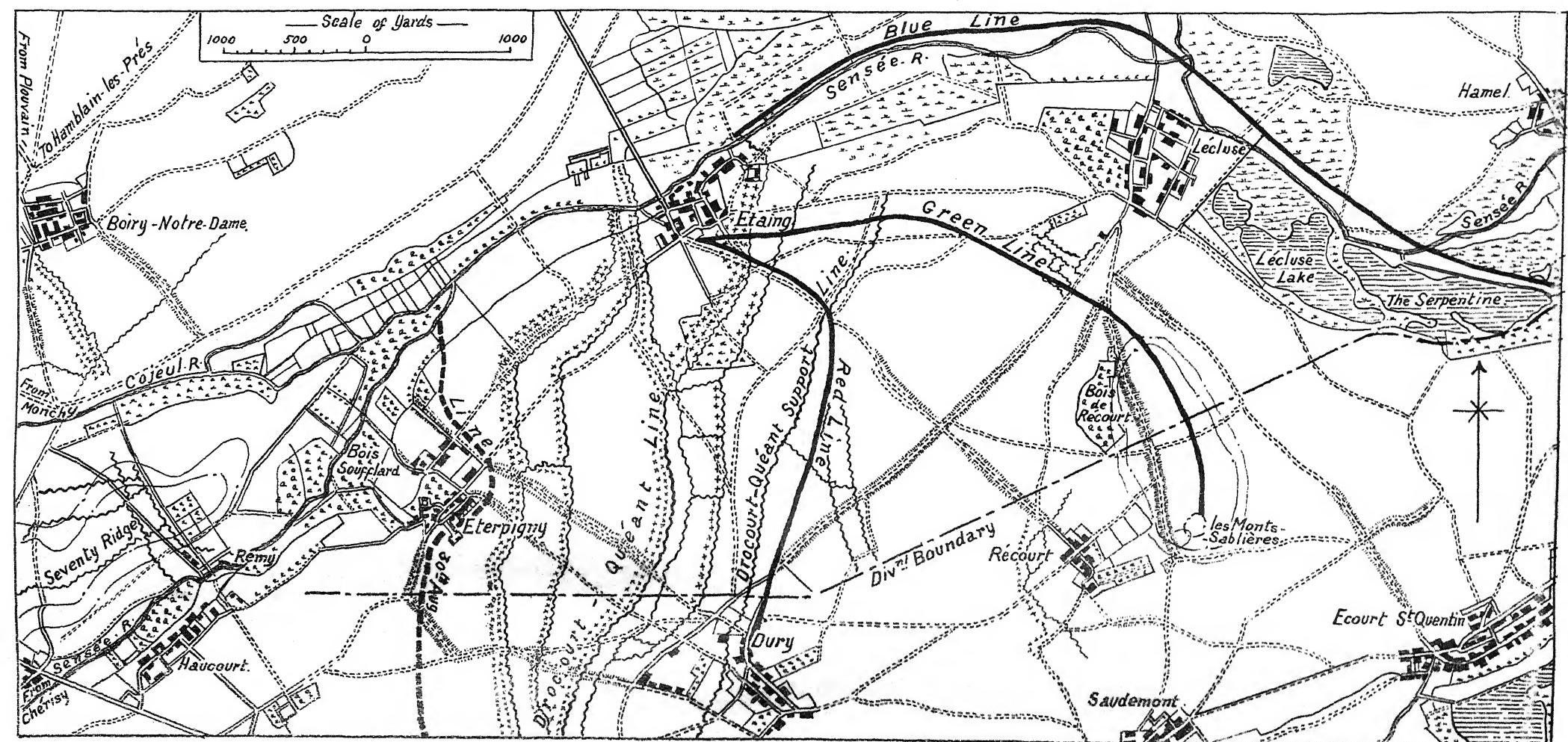
The First Battalion, Eterpigny. Shelling was very heavy throughout the day of August 30th and the Battalion suffered considerably. Companies had been ordered to send out patrols to occupy the eastern edge of Eterpigny but, by 1.0 p.m., they had reported that this was impossible owing to machine-gun and artillery fire. It was decided, therefore, that the 11th and 12th Brigades should attack that afternoon with artillery support.

Zero hour was 4.0 p.m., but at the last minute the barrage line was brought back to a point one hundred and fifty yards east of the River Sensée, instead of four hundred yards. At 4.0 p.m. the barrage fell and, unfortunately, the two leading companies were too far forward and sustained casualties from our own shells. The barrage was most accurate and was followed closely, the objective being gained at all points except on the right of the village where a sunken road was mistaken for the one which was the objective; the right road was made good the same night when the line ran beyond the east edge of the village. The advance was over difficult country, wooded and marshy, but the operation was a complete success and the Battalion's captures were some thirty-five prisoners and three machine-guns.

That night the Battalion was relieved, but with difficulty, the enemy shelling continuously the only two bridges available, and went into trenches on the western slopes of Seventy Ridge. On the 31st it moved into communication trenches running east and west over the ridge and remained there under continuous shell-fire throughout September 1st.

THE BATTLE OF THE SCARPE.

1918.



THE FIRST BATTALION. 30th August–3rd September, 1918.

September 1st marked the close of the second stage in the British offensive. By this date the Allied front had reached the line of the River Somme from Nesle to Péronne ; thence northwards it included Bapaume, and, as a result of the successful issue of the first actions of the battle begun on August 26th, it now ran along the high ground east of Chérisy and Haucourt and included Eterpigny and Plouvain.

" Our progress brought our troops to within assaulting distance of the powerful trench system running from the Hindenburg Line at Quéant to the Lens defences about Drocourt, the breaking of which would turn the whole of the enemy's organized position on a wide front southwards." *

THE STORMING OF THE DROCOURT-QUÉANT LINE.

For this attack the 4th British Division was under the orders of the Canadian Corps which was employing the 1st and 4th Canadian Divisions. The 4th British Division was on the left of the corps with the 4th Canadian Division on its right and the 11th Division of the XXIIInd Corps on its left.

The objectives of the 4th British Division were :—

The Red Line which ran from north of Dury in a slightly convex curve east of the Drocourt-Quéant Support to the southern edge of Etaing.

The Green Line followed the ridge from Les Monts Sablières, east of Récourt, northwards past the east of Récourt Wood and thence roughly westwards to join the Red Line south of Etaing.

The Blue Line ran on the far side of the Serpentine, Lécluse Lake and through the marshes east of Lécluse itself and then swept back to the northern outskirts of Etaing.

Thus the initial assault would be moving due east and the subsequent advance roughly north-east.

The Red Line was to be captured by the 12th British Brigade, after which the 11th British Brigade would pass through and advance to the Green and Blue Lines.

The First Battalion. The Sensée River. September 2nd-3rd, 1918.	The First Battalion would be on the right of the 11th Brigade with the 10th Canadian Brigade on its right and the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. on its left ; the 2nd Bn. Seaforth Highlanders of the 10th British Brigade would be in support behind the First Battalion, the remainder of that brigade being close behind in divisional reserve.
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By 1.0 a.m., September 2nd, the Battalion was to be in its assembly

* Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch dated December 21st, 1918. Supplement to the London Gazette dated January 7th, 1919.

position south of the Bois Soufflard with "C" and "B" as right and left front companies and "A" and "I" in support. Zero hour was 5.0 a.m., and at 5.30 a.m. the Battalion was to move forward to east and west of the sunken road south of Eterpigny and to advance again in sufficient time to cross the Red Line at 8.0 a.m.

Thereafter it was to make for Récourt Wood, which, in conjunction with the Hampshire Regiment, it would capture and then, continuing the advance over the high ground and down the slope, would seize and hold the crossings over the River Sensée. These, it will be noticed, were on the far side of the Serpentine and Lécluse Lake. Eight tanks were to be used for the capture of the Red Line, of which two would put down a smoke-screen; all ranks were warned that "the smoke, though evil-smelling, is in no way dangerous."

Such was the programme.

At 5.0 a.m. the barrage fell, but the enemy barrage was weak and scattered; hostile machine-guns were, however, very accurate. The pace of our barrage was very slow and the Battalion perhaps came slightly in advance of where it should have been. Orders were issued to halt for one hour just beyond the Drocourt-Quéant front line.

Unfortunately, when the advance was resumed, the two right companies moved rather too soon and were caught in terrific machine-gun fire and also by two batteries of .77-mm. guns firing point-blank. The two company commanders were not heard of for some time, though one managed to rejoin after having been captured by two German machine-gunners. At about 7.30 a.m. Colonel Fellowes was wounded. At 8.0 a.m. the two left companies tried to advance with the Hampshire Regiment, but the volume of machine-gun fire opened upon them immediately they left the Drocourt-Quéant support completely stopped all movement; efforts to get forward leading merely to further casualties, the two companies withdrew to the last-mentioned line. Eventually the Battalion was collected and reorganized in one trench and there was no further incident. Later the enemy was reported to be massing for a heavy counter-attack on Dury, but by that time the Battalion was ready and the position consolidated; no counter-attack, however, took place.

At 2.0 a.m. on September 3rd, verbal orders were received to attack at 5.0 a.m. behind a barrage the trench line some seven hundred yards in front. All arrangements were made, but at zero hour no barrage fell. The companies were moved forward out of their trench to be under better control, but at 5.4 a.m. word was received that the attack was cancelled. Patrols which were at once sent out found that the enemy had gone.

Moving forward in bounds behind patrols the Battalion, by 12 noon, was in the sunken road east of Récourt Wood.

The 2nd Bn. Seaforth Highlanders having come up in support, the Battalion, now very weak, was relieved in daylight and moved back to the Monchy area.

Since August 29th casualties had been :—

Lieutenant C. A. Pickering and forty other ranks killed ; Captain W. H. Corris, Lieutenant G. W. Glover, D.S.O., 2nd-Lieutenant E. C. Garton, and two other ranks died of wounds ; Lieut.-Colonel R. T. Fellowes, D.S.O., M.C., Captain A. S. S. Herbert, M.C., Lieutenants B. G. Baker, R. W. H. Holmes à Court, 2nd-Lieutenants J. Harvey, J. C. Shoobridge, A. E. Salter, E. J. Freear, P. Romney, W. G. J. Tustin and three hundred and twenty-eight other ranks wounded (including gas cases), Captain A. W. M. Rissik missing (believed prisoner) and thirty-two other ranks missing.*

The 4th Division received a warm letter of congratulation from Lieut.-General Sir A. Currie, Commanding the Canadian Corps. "To me," wrote Sir Arthur, "it was a peculiar satisfaction to have the 4th Division associated with us, because it was by them that the 1st Canadian Division received its first instructions in the art of war in France." †

For the operations of August and September 2nd-3rd, the First Battalion received one Bar to the M.C., two M.C.s (of which one was awarded to 1st Lieutenant J. W. Aldridge, M.O.R.C., U.S.A.), two Bars to the M.M. and eighteen M.M.s.

On September 4th the First Battalion moved by 'bus to Frévillers, north of Tinques, where there were very comfortable billets for everyone. Here a happy fortnight was spent in "quite the best village we have been in for a long time": the first three days were devoted to resting and cleaning up and the remainder to re-organizing and to training.

On September 7th Major G. W. Liddell, D.S.O., arrived and assumed command ‡ and about the same time two hundred and seventy-five other ranks arrived as drafts.

On September 18th the First Battalion was preparing for a move next day.

* Captain (A/Lieut.-Colonel) R. T. Fellowes, D.S.O., M.C., now Lord Ailwyn, had held command of the First Battalion continuously for the past twenty-five months.

Discussing the action with an officer of the Battalion the second-in-command of the 2nd Bn. Seaforth Highlanders expressed warm approbation of the work of the First Battalion, adding, "If your Colonel had not been hit we should have got across the Sensée that day." This remark is, of course, in no way derogatory to the officer upon whom the mantle of command fell so suddenly.

† At the time to which General Currie referred a Canadian battalion attached to the First Battalion for instruction was commanded by Major L. J. Lipsett, Royal Irish Regiment, who, in this action, as major-general, was commanding the 4th Division. He was killed on October 14th whilst in command of the division.

‡ He was the original adjutant of the First Battalion in August, 1914.

THE BATTLE OF HAVRINCOURT AND EPEHY.

As a result of the operations of September 2nd/3rd the German forces fell back until, north of Havrincourt, they were sheltered behind the Canal du Nord and, south of that place, holding as their main line of resistance the Hindenburg Line. In front of the latter, however, there were strong positions about Havrincourt and Epehy which had to be taken before attacking the main position.

The 37th Division was to be employed in these operations and the Thirteenth Battalion was to become familiar with scenes well known to the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions in April and May, 1917.

The Thirteenth
Battalion.
Attack on the
Trescault Spur.
September 12th-
14th, 1918.

On September 3rd the Thirteenth Battalion moved to huts north of Favreuil, where it put in some training until the 9th, when it went up to the main line of resistance west of Havrincourt Wood, remaining there until the 11th.

* The 37th Division was to attack with the New Zealand Division on its right and the 62nd Division on its left.

In the 37th Division the attack would be made by the 111th Brigade, with the Thirteenth Battalion on the right, the 13th Bn. 60th on the left and the 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers in support. In the Battalion "B" Company was to be on the right, "D" on the left, "C" in support and "A" in reserve. The jumping-off line ran from a point just north of the south-western toe of Havrincourt Wood for six hundred yards in a south-easterly direction and the left of "D" Company would be directed just east of Bilhem.

There were three objectives, of which the final was some two thousand seven hundred yards away.

"A" Company was to detail one platoon to take up at dusk a line of observation outside the wood on the left of "D" Company and to push forward some three hundred yards to positions from which it could cover the advance at zero with fire. After the first objective had been gained "C" Company would move forward and consolidate two strong-points some one thousand yards ahead. The attack would be behind a barrage and zero would be at 5.25 a.m.

On the afternoon of September 11th the Battalion moved from Bertincourt and concentrated in Havrincourt Wood preparatory to taking up its assembly position. The wood was heavily shelled but there were few casualties. "A" Company appears to have been given more to do than

* Map will be found facing p. 22.

the orders indicated, as it formed an outpost line outside the wood on the whole front of the line of assembly and, besides having several casualties from shell-fire, was attacked by a strong enemy patrol which wounded an officer and two men with bombs.

In spite of gas-shelling of the wood the Battalion was in position by 4.45 a.m. on September 12th and at 5.25 a.m. the attack was launched.

"A" Company was most successful in its rôle and gave considerable assistance with Lewis-gun fire from the edge of the wood, but the advance was momentarily checked by heavy machine-gun fire from enemy strong points ; these, however, were promptly and skilfully dealt with and, by 7.0 a.m., messages were coming in that the leading companies had reached the first objective and that "C" Company was consolidating its strong-points, whilst the first batch of prisoners also appeared.

By 9.0 a.m. it was known that all objectives had been gained and touch established with neighbouring units, the Battalion having captured six machine-guns, one trench-mortar and other material.

At 6.35 p.m., after a comparatively quiet day, there was an increase in enemy harassing fire and much movement to be seen ; this was followed by a determined counter-attack against "D" Company on the left. The attack was a complete failure and the survivors, on ejection by "D" Company, were cut off by our S.O.S. barrage and lost heavily. The rest of the night was normal.

At 6.0 a.m. on the 13th "A" Company relieved "C," who in turn relieved "D" ; the last-named company had suffered heavily, having no one left above the rank of acting-corporal except the commander, Captain P. F. Davy, M.C., and Corporal Faggeter.

During the day the enemy kept up a persistent and spiteful bombardment and, in the evening, repeated his counter-attack of the day before. Upon this occasion it was accompanied by a heavy bombardment and both right and left companies were attacked. "B" Company on the right dealt with the matter with Lewis-gun and rifle fire ; some fifteen of the enemy succeeded in entering "C" Company's trench but were flung out into our wire and there dispatched. By 8.50 p.m. all was quiet on the Battalion front except that, as during the day, the enemy maintained a steady gas-shell bombardment of the eastern edge of the wood throughout the night.

The next day, September 14th, the 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers and the 62nd Division on the left were attacking and, although at one time it appeared as though the Battalion would be involved in the subsequent confused fighting, it was not employed, and, that evening, was relieved and went back to near Vélu.

From September 11th to the 14th the Battalion had lost 2nd-Lieutenants F. T. Rice, C. E. Hadwen, M.M., and twenty-six other ranks killed ; Lieutenant W. B. Arnold, 2nd-Lieutenant E. Penfold and ninety-eight other ranks wounded, with twelve other ranks missing.

The Battalion account concludes with a word of praise for the Transport under Lieutenant M. G. S. Hopson, which unfailingly brought up, by pack-mule, water and supplies to an advanced dump without the loss of a man or a mule.

On the 15th the Battalion moved a little further back to Lebucqui  re, where it remained until the 18th. On that day the enemy heavily attacked the 3rd Division front and, the position being uncertain, the Battalion was moved up to a position west of Havrincourt Wood until the evening, when, being no longer required, it returned to Lebucqui  re.

On the 20th there was another move to Ligny-Thilloy and another the next day to Pys, some four miles west of Bapaume.

"Four moves in four days were sufficiently exhausting ; but it was no use grouching, and we accepted every experience as it came, realizing that we were just pieces on a chess-board which changed more and more rapidly as the end of the Game approached." *

At Pys the Battalion rested and carried out training and made preparations to hold sports on the 30th. Sudden orders were, however, received on the 29th to move to the neighbourhood of Villers-au-Flos, south-east of Bapaume, as a preliminary to going into the line.

During the month of September the Thirteenth Battalion received one D.S.O., awarded to the C.O., Colonel Mostyn-Owen, two Bars to the M.C., of which one was earned by Captain A. W. Raymond, M.C. (R.A.M.C.), five M.C.s, four D.C.M.s and twenty-nine M.M.s.

No Battalion of the Regiment was called upon to take part in the next stage of the Allied offensive—the Battle of Cambrai and the Hindenburg Line—nor in the Battle in Flanders which followed.

As a result of these great successes the enemy again began to withdraw and fell back from south of Lens to Armenti  res. This affected the 20th Division but did not seriously involve the Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions.

On October 1st the Eleventh Battalion took over from the 8th Division *The 20th Division.* a portion of the front line in the Willerval sector but was relieved next night and, on the 3rd, was taken in lorries from Arras to Ablain St. Nazaire. It moved thence to a rear defence line on the Arras-Lens road near Avion, where it was in reserve to the 59th

* "For the Duration," p. 136.

Brigade, which that day advanced beyond Lens, Sallaumines and Méricourt, and on the 5th moved by 'bus to Savy, near Tinques.

Of the Twelfth Battalion there is also little to record; it remained in brigade reserve at Méricourt until October 5th, when it was relieved and moved by 'bus from Canadian Crucifix to Frévillers.

The 20th Division had now been relieved by the 12th Division and was in G.H.Q. Reserve, where it remained until the end of October re-organizing and training.

The successful issue of the Battle of Cambrai and the Hindenburg Line which came to an end on October 5th marked the close of the first phase of the British offensive.

"The enemy's defence in the last and strongest of his prepared positions had been shattered. The whole of the main Hindenburg defences had passed into our possession, and a wide gap had been driven through such rear trench systems as had existed behind them. The effect of the victory upon the subsequent course of the campaign was decisive. The threat to the enemy's communications was now direct and instant, for nothing but the natural obstacles of a wooded and well-watered countryside lay between our Armies and Maubeuge."*

THE SECOND PHASE: THE FIGHTING IN OPEN COUNTRY.

THE SECOND BATTLE OF LE CATEAU.

"The second and concluding phase of the British offensive now opened, in which the Fourth and Third Armies and the right of the First Army moved forward with their left flank on the canal line which runs from Cambrai to Mons and their right covered by the French First Army."† The fighting fell into three stages, the first of which was the Battle of Le Cateau, as a result of which the enemy was forced to evacuate Cambrai and fall back behind the line of the River Selle.

The Thirteenth
Battalion.

‡ The Thirteenth Battalion was the first battalion of the Regiment to be engaged but, as events will show, although it shared in the interesting experience of the advance it was not to be seriously involved.

On September 30th the Battalion left Villers-au-Flos and moved up to relieve part of the 95th Brigade, 5th Division, north-east of Gonnelleieu, and

* Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch dated December 21st, 1918. Supplement to the London Gazette, dated January 7th, 1919.

† Ibid.

‡ Map will be found facing p. 190.

on October 1st relieved the 2nd Canterbury Battalion, New Zealand Division, in the front line west of the Scheldt Canal, opposite Vaucelles, and east of Lateau Wood.*

The 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers was on the right and the 13th Bn. 60th in reserve.

The line was fairly quiet, but the enemy resisted all attempts by patrols to cross the canal. On the night of October 4th/5th the 60th relieved the Royal Fusiliers and, during the night, the enemy was very active, patrols being seen all along the canal-bank until dawn; even as late as 8.0 a.m., on the 5th, rifle fire was observed coming from Bantouzelle, but at 9.0 a.m. the enemy was shelling Vaucelles and the wood north of it. Two platoons of the Thirteenth Battalion immediately crossed the canal, followed by the remainder of the Battalion, the crossing being effected by closing the lock gates and using them as a bridge. The 60th, on the right, had a very tedious crossing by a bridge which consisted of one damaged plank. Both battalions pushed on without resistance until they reached the Beaurevoir-Masnières line, which proved to be a well-sited and well-wired trench-system. Heavy machine-gun and shrapnel fire being encountered the battalions formed an outpost-line and consolidated, in depth, the Thirteenth Battalion being on the high ground west of Bel Aise Farm and more than a mile from the canal.

This line was held and improved until the 7th, upon which night the Royal Fusiliers moved up to an assembly position behind the Battalion preparatory to passing through next morning to the assault of the Beaurevoir-Masnières Line.

The assault formed part of an attack carried out by the Third and Fourth Armies on a front of seventeen miles from south of Cambrai; French troops carried on the attack as far as St. Quentin, whilst further south again the French and Americans attacked east of the River Meuse and in Champagne.

At 4.30 a.m. on October 8th the Royal Fusiliers attacked with "C" Company of the Thirteenth Battalion attached as support company, although not destined to be used.

The Battalion also provided three platoons as escort for three tanks which were to accompany the infantry. The attack was successful although only one tank crossed the wire, its escort taking eighty prisoners. By evening the line had reached Guillemin Farm-Bout du Pré, both south of Esnes; an advance of some three miles but the 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers had incurred two hundred casualties in the process.

* Vide p. 179. It will be recalled that Lateau Wood marked the right flank of the 20th Division when the enemy counter-attacked on November 30th, 1917.



CAMBRAI.

21st October, 1918.

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The 111th Brigade then passed into divisional reserve and moved forward during the morning of the 9th behind the remainder of the 37th Division, which, with the whole line, was following up an enemy who, disorganized, was now in full retreat.

That night the Thirteenth Battalion spent in bivouac round Guillémin Farm and, on October 10th, moved into billets in Ligny-en-Cambresis, the scene of the First Battalion's debut in the War.* The same church which was the rendez-vous for the rear-guard companies of the First Battalion on August 26th, 1914, was, on October 10th, 1918, still intact, although prepared by the enemy for demolition.†

Since October 1st the Battalion had lost 2nd-Lieutenant J. M. Allan wounded and thirty-three other rank casualties.

As the Thirteenth Battalion was to remain at Ligny for ten days, attention must be given to events elsewhere.

THE ADVANCE TO THE SELLE.

It was now the turn of the Third Battalion which was to come into action in the same battle to the north of the Thirteenth Battalion.

The former on October 7th marched to a camp at Anneux, four miles west of Cambrai, and moved the next day to an old German trench near Rumilly, south of that city, being now in divisional reserve.‡ On the 9th there was another move to a wood outside Niergnies, which was heavily shelled during the evening, the Battalion having sixteen casualties. The march was continued on the 10th and that evening the Battalion was in bivouac south of Rieux Tower, which was on the Cambrai-St. Vaast road and a mile south-west of Rieux village.

The Third Battalion. § At 6.45 p.m., October 10th, Colonel Kewley was sent for to Brigade H.Q. to receive verbal instructions regarding an attack for the next day; this was to start from Avesnes-les-Aubert and included the capture of St. Aubert and the occupation of the railway, east of the River Selle.

Avesnes-St. Aubert. October 11th-13th, 1918. The conference lasted so long that company commanders were not assembled until after 10.0 p.m., when verbal instructions were given as to objectives and the method of attack. Such written orders as there were were written later and no written orders from the 17th Brigade arrived until the Battalion had formed up at the starting-point. As a fact no

* Vide Vol. I. p. 17.

† "For the Duration," p. 139.

‡ Cambrai had been occupied during the night October 8th/9th by the 57th Division and Canadian Corps.

§ Map will be found facing p. 354.

copy of these orders appears to exist. The brigade was to attack with the Third Battalion on the right, the 1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers on the left and the 8th Bn. The Queen's Regt. in support. On the right would be the Welsh Guards of the 3rd Guards Brigade.

Of the XVIIth Corps, to which the 24th Division now belonged, the 17th Brigade was the sole representative in the front line of this attack.

The attack was to be made in bounds, of which the first included the village of St. Aubert : the position of the others is immaterial.

At 3.0 a.m., October 11th, the Battalion moved off in order H.Q., "A," "C," attached Trench Mortar and Machine Gun Corps detachments followed by "D" Company ; "B" Company is not mentioned. The assembly was duly carried out and the attack started five minutes late—a fact which had no bearing on the result as no concerted arrangements had been made with neighbouring troops and the Battalion on the left started even later. The Battalion had "C" Company on the right and "A" on the left extended from the Cambrai-Solesmes railway to the valley of the Ereclin stream. The time of the actual start is doubtful but apparently was about 4.0 a.m. and there was no barrage.

* "The R.B. got along the high ground with some loss—as far as the road from Avesnes station to St. Aubert, and here came under very heavy machine-gun fire from a water-tower which stood on the top of the hill and was the first building in St. Aubert.

"No. 9 Platoon of 'C' Company, the right front platoon, got over the hill but caught it badly from another machine-gun in St. Aubert, covering the reverse slope, and dug in over the brow. Pickering,† who commanded it, was killed there. Massy-Beresford, commanding the company, was hit and also C.S.-M. Garner.

"No. 10 (left-front) Platoon was wiped out almost to a man early on and No. 12 (left support) could do very little and it was absolutely impossible to do more that day. 'A' Company (which for some reason started much earlier than 'C') was likewise held up by a machine-gun on the Fusiliers' front, firing across the valley, and the Fusiliers, and the division on the left, made next to no headway at all during the day."

The Battalion was forced by machine-gun fire from the flanks to withdraw slightly, but hung on to a position midway between Avesnes and St. Aubert until the evening ; the area was then re-organized with "B" and "D" Companies in the line and "A" and "C" in cellars in Avesnes, where Battalion H.Q. had been established since the morning in the most

* From Captain R. C. Bridgeman's private diary (now Viscount Bridgeman).

† 2nd-Lieutenant W. C. Pickering.

easterly house of the village, whence a good view of the action could be obtained.

The main line of resistance was the eastern outskirts of Avesnes, and the front-line companies were to push forward posts which would also maintain touch with units on the flanks.

Casualties during the day had been two officers and forty-eight other ranks killed, seven officers and one hundred and twenty-six other ranks wounded and three missing.

About 8.0 p.m. the commanding officer was once more sent for to Brigade H.Q. and informed of the plan for attack next day, for which zero hour was eventually fixed at 12 noon. This operation never took place as, at 8.0 a.m. on the 12th, word was received that the enemy was retiring.

The Battalion advanced with "D" Company on the right and "B" on the left, the movement being carried out with rapidity, "D" Company pushing on at a great pace, taking two machine-guns, and clearing the way for the advance of the troops on the right. "D" Company reported that it had reached the high ground west of Haussy at 11.40 a.m. and that, although not in touch with anyone on either flank, it was "having great fun" and that "the Hun was running." "A" Company was immediately ordered up to gain touch with "D" Company and protect the right flank; at the same time orders were sent to "B" Company, which was known to be in touch with the Royal Fusiliers on the left, to press on and get touch with "D" Company. By 4.0 p.m. the Battalion was in position, west of the River Selle, and was in touch on both flanks.

During the night the 8th Bn. The Queen's Regt. passed through the Battalion to force the river-crossings and continue the advance, but was unable to do more than establish posts at the west end of the crossings.

The next morning, October 13th, the Battalion was relieved and withdrew to billets in Rieux.

The total casualties for this successful day were six other ranks killed and thirty-one wounded. On the 16th there was a move to Canoncles and another on the 19th to billets in the Faubourg St. Druon, Cambrai. On the 21st the Battalion string band gave a concert in Cambrai, the first held there after its deliverance from German rule, and there is preserved in the War Diary a charming letter of thanks from the Curé of St. Druon, the Abbé Thuliez, addressed to Monsieur Le Chef d'Orchestre; the concert realized 1,500 francs towards the reconstruction of Cambrai, of which the Abbé was temporarily Maire.

Training was carried out daily until the end of the month, which found the Third Battalion back in St. Aubert.

THE CAPTURE OF DOUAI AND ADVANCE TO THE SCHELDT.*

The Second
Battalion.
October 7th-19th,
1918.

On October 6th the Second Battalion received its orders for the attack on the 7th. This would be carried out by the 23rd Brigade, with the Second Battalion and 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. on its left.

The objective of the 23rd Brigade was a line running from a point five hundred yards east of Biache-St.-Vaast north-westwards to include the cemetery and station of that place, thence along the Fresnes les Montauban road to within five hundred yards of that village, and thence westwards to the southern point of Railway Copse. The task of the Second Battalion appears to have been confined to the construction of two posts, one between Square Wood and Railway Copse, the other in conjunction with the 23rd Brigade at the southern point of the latter : for each of these posts one platoon would be detailed. Beyond this the only remaining work was the deepening of a captured trench by two more platoons. Zero hour was 5.0 a.m. At this time Colonel Brand left to assume command of the 25th Brigade ; Major J. K. V. Brown, East Lancashire Regiment, was in command of the Battalion for the operations although he and General Brand did not assume command until 8.0 a.m. on the 7th.

For the attack "A" Company was in front line, and, presumably, found the four platoons above mentioned, with "B" and "C" in support and "D" in reserve.

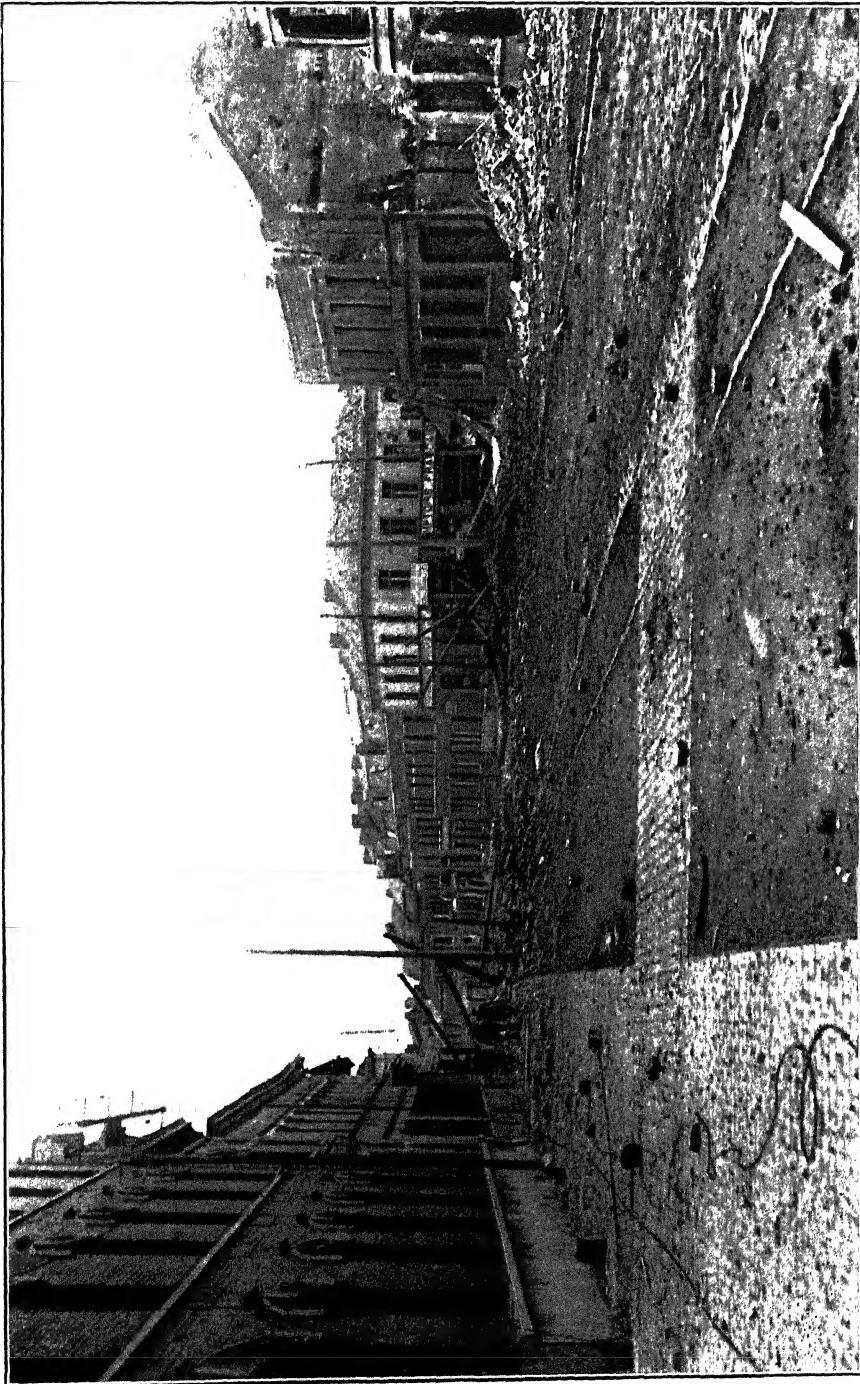
The attack took place punctually and is described as being a complete success, all objectives being gained ; as a fact, more than these appear to have been gained as, by next morning, the Second Battalion was through Railway Copse and the Royal Berkshires had cleared the Fresnes-Rouvroy Line and joined up with the 24th Brigade on the left.† The only casualty suffered was one other rank wounded.

On the next day, October 8th, this success was exploited and the Battalion pushed on to Mauville Farm, occupying Fresnes village, from which it was later moved on replacement by the 2nd Bn. Devonshire Regt. By the evening the enemy had withdrawn to the Drocourt-Quéant Line and the Battalion, on relief by the 2nd Bn. East Lancashire Regt., was moved by lorry right back to Ecurie Wood Camp, north of Arras, where it was in reserve.

On the 9th Major J. B. G. Taylor, M.C., arrived and assumed command. Two nights only were spent there and on the morning of the 11th the

* Map will be found facing p. 342.

† This is the first mention of the 24th Brigade in the 25th Brigade Diary, or Operation Orders.



DOUAI.

17th October, 1918.

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Battalion returned by lorry to Gavrelle, whence it marched to the Drocourt-Quéant Line, occupying what, until that morning, had been the old German front and second line. For, at 5.10 a.m. on the 11th, the 23rd and 25th Brigades had attacked and taken this line and had made a big advance towards Douai. The outpost line of the 25th Brigade that night ran from just west of Faubourg d'Esquerchin to just east of Cuincy and the Battalion, still in reserve, was south-east of Izel-lez-Esquerchin. Dug-outs had been prepared for demolition, so, to be on the safe side, trench-shelters were occupied in preference.

On October 12th the brigade was east of Douai Prison, on the Lens-Douai road, with the Battalion on the railway embankment at Quiéry-la-Motte, where it was shelled during the night; one damaged water-cart was the only casualty.

The Battalion spent the 13th and 14th standing-by at Quiéry doing some training whilst officers reconnoitred the country ahead. "All ranks enjoyed a good supply of vegetables from deserted country-side."

On the 15th the Battalion relieved the 2nd Bn. Royal Berkshire Regt. in the front line, which was still between Douai Prison and the Haute Deule Canal, behind which obstacle lay Douai. There was a certain amount of shelling, believed to be due to the enemy using up reserve stocks of ammunition, particularly in the area of the reserve company ("B"); the company was accordingly moved forward to cellars in Cuincy, having lost Lieutenant A. C. Russell and five other ranks wounded.

On the 17th patrols sent out by both front-line companies found all bridges over the canal destroyed; so late as the 15th air-photographs had shown the majority to be intact. At 3.0 p.m. a patrol of "C" Company

Douai entered. had crossed the canal and entered Douai, being the first troops to enter the town, which was found completely ransacked. The 2nd Bn. Middlesex Regt. also claimed to be the first Allied troops in Douai. No decision has ever been given on this point so a dead-heat would appear to be a fair solution.* Much wanton damage had been done in the town, pianos being thrown into canals, furniture broken with axes and pipes removed from the Cathedral organ.

The Battalion quickly followed "C" Company's patrol and, by 7.0 p.m., the line ran just east of Douai. Although most of the bridges had been destroyed, it was possible to get rations and all necessary supplies across the canal to the Battalion.

On the 18th the Battalion pushed on with "D" Company in front line

* The War Diary of the 8th Division states that, at 2.0 p.m., "the 2nd Middlesex Regt. crossed the Canal and was entering Douai" and that, at the same hour, "a patrol of the right company of the 2nd Rifle Brigade entered Douai and found the town evacuated by the enemy."

and went through Waziers ; there was no opposition until a stream was reached west of Lallaing, where an enemy machine-gun opened fire. "D" Company was finally held up on the River Scarpe, east of Lallaing, but "A" Company then went through and, crossing the river during the night, had by morning gained Vred and Cattelet—a remarkable performance over ground seamed with dykes and streams. On this day Lieut.-Colonel T. R. Eastwood, M.C., took over command.

On October 19th the Battalion was relieved and went into billets in Anhiers, except "A" Company, which remained in Vred.

Casualties since October 7th appear to have been remarkably light, two officers being wounded and other ranks losing thirty-three, of whom two only were killed.

Next day it marched to Marchiennes and remained there two nights.

On the 21st the diary records that "this was the eleventh day out of the line since the Battalion went in on August 5th last in the Vimy area." Had the recorder but known it, the Second Battalion had left the line for the last time during the Great War.

THE BATTLE OF THE SELLE RIVER.

It will be recalled that the second and concluding phase of the British offensive falls into three stages, of which the first was the Second Battle of Le Cateau.*

In the second stage the River Selle was to be forced and the front pushed forward to the general line Sambre Canal—west edge of the Mormal Forest—Valenciennes.

The battle opened on October 17th with an attack by the Fourth Army, with which this record is not concerned. On October 20th the line of the River Selle north of Le Cateau was attacked by seven divisions of the Third Army and one of the First Army—the 4th Division.

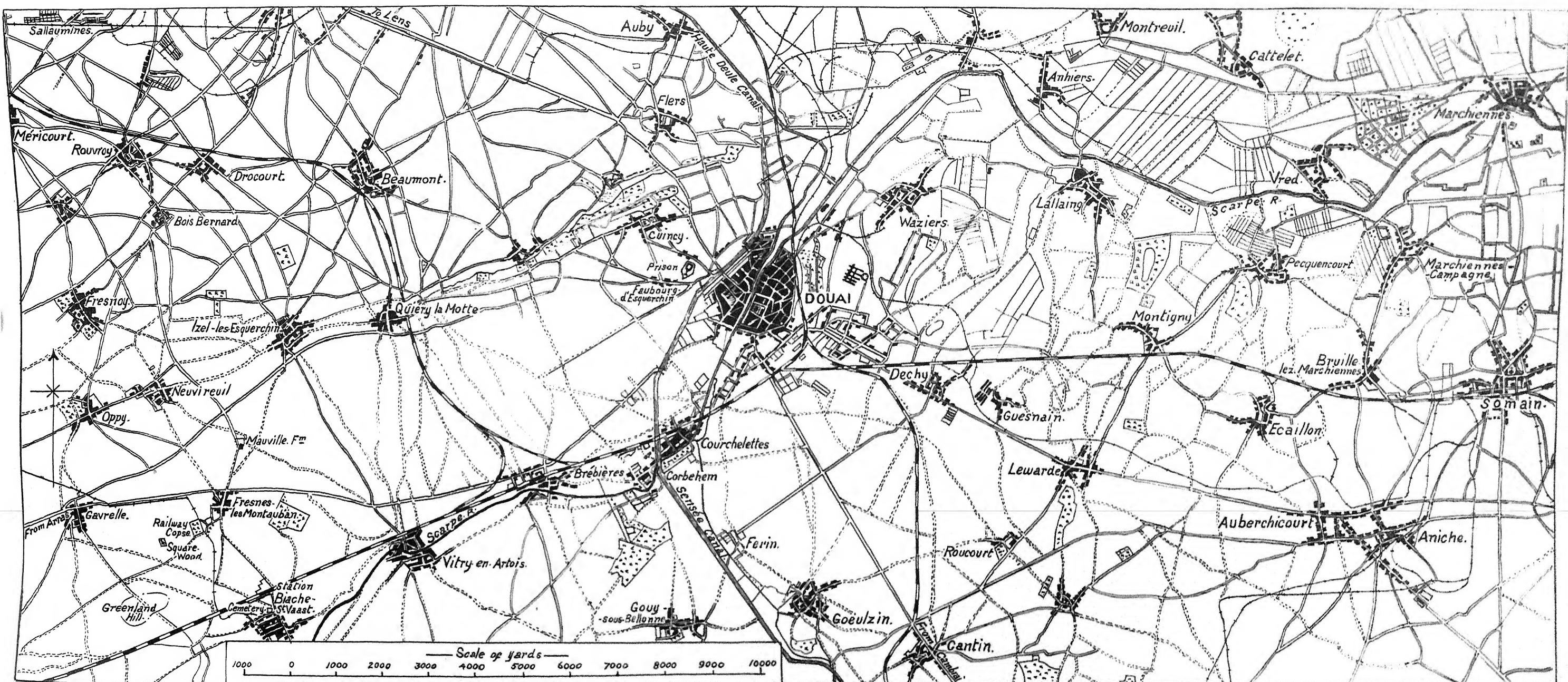
The First Battalion. Between September 19th and October 6th the First Battalion did two tours in the line with one spell in reserve in the Orange Hill area. The first tour was in the Hamblain-les-Prés sector, where the enemy, by damming the Scarpe, had placed over seven hundred yards of water between the opposing lines ; the other tour was in the L'Ecluse sector, where again there were extensive floods on either side of the River Sensée.

The period calls for no comment and, on October 7th, the Battalion was in No. 2 Camp at Berneville, in which it had been the previous March.

* Vide p. 335.

THE FINAL ADVANCE.

1918.



THE SECOND BATTALION.

THE CAPTURE OF DOUAI AND ADVANCE TO THE SCHELDT.

7th-9th October, 1918.

On October 11th the 11th Brigade moved by 'bus to south of Bourlon Wood and marched to billets between Fontaine-Notre-Dame and Cambrai.

Accommodation was very sketchy but on the 13th there was another move to Escaudœuvres, north-east of Cambrai, where the Battalion set to work clearing its billets ; unfortunately the XXIIInd Corps H.Q. then required the billets and the Battalion had to find, and clean, other quarters.

On October 14th Major-General L. J. Lipsett, C.B., C.M.G., was, most unhappily, killed ; he was carrying out a reconnaissance of the River Selle, west of Saulzoir, when he was struck in the face by a machine-gun bullet and died almost immediately.

On the 15th Major-General C. H. T. Lucas, C.M.G., D.S.O., assumed command of the 4th Division.

On October 17th the Battalion went into support near Avesnes-le-Sec, some seventeen miles east of its last sector at L'Ecluse, where shelling was fairly heavy but sporadic.

The next day being misty was spent in improving the position ; that night "B" Company relieved the left company of the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. preparatory to the attack planned for the early hours of October 20th. During the night shelling was heavy but scattered.

After a quiet day the Battalion on the evening of the 19th joined "B" Company in the assembly position and was distributed with "B" and "I" Companies in front and "C" and "A" in support.

On this day of heavy fighting elsewhere the 11th Brigade was not called upon to attack, for, during the night of October 19th/20th, it was learned that the enemy was withdrawing on the flanks and the attack was cancelled ; accordingly "A" and "C" Companies returned to their old position.

Eventually the Battalion next day followed the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. and 1st Bn. Somerset Light Infantry through Haspres, "A" and "C" Companies passing through "B" and "I" just before entering the village and establishing a line in front of the railway embankment east of the village ; the latter companies, that evening, going into billets in the cellars of Haspres.

The day of the 21st was spent resting, but that evening the Battalion relieved the Somerset Light Infantry in the front line, which now ran nearly five hundred yards west of the River Ecaillon from the railway to the Haspres-Monchaux-sur-Ecaillon road. Patrols met with considerable resistance from snipers and machine-guns but, before daylight, had carried out "a smart piece of work" in capturing nine men with a machine-gun and an automatic rifle in Bouvencule Farm ; this proved to be a valuable identification as the men belonged to a division which had only just come into the line, whilst the capture of the farm led to the clearing of the wood

to the east of it. No further advance was possible on the 23rd and that night the Battalion was relieved in the front line.

Before continuing the story of the advance of the First Battalion attention must now be given to the doings of the Thirteenth.

OPERATIONS BEYOND THE SELLE RIVER.

In the early hours of October 23rd the Fourth and Third Armies attacked with four and nine divisions, respectively, in the latter group being included the 37th Division in the IVth Corps.

The latter was to attack with two divisions in front line; the 5th on the right and the 42nd on the left, whose objective would be the Blue Line which ran, so far as the 111th Brigade was to be concerned, from near the Harpies brook on the north-western outskirts of Vendegie au Bois for some eighteen hundred yards north of Petit Vendegies to the road connecting the latter place with Romeries.

After the capture of the Blue Line the 37th Division on the right and the New Zealand Division on the left would pass through and continue the advance to the Green Line and subsequently the Green-Dotted and Brown Lines. The 37th Division was to be represented by the 111th Brigade with the 1st Bn. Essex Regt., attached from the 112th Brigade. The Green Line ran, from left to right, from just south of the Chapelle des Six Chemins for two thousand yards south-eastwards past the south-west corner of Neuville.

For the capture and consolidation of the Green Line the 13th Bn. 60th on the right and the Thirteenth Battalion on the left were to be employed and they had orders to "exploit" * the village of Neuville after the barrage had died down; should no opposition be encountered, the 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers and 1st Bn. Essex Regt. would pass through the 13th Bn. 60th and Thirteenth Battalion respectively on the line of the River St. Georges and would push on to the Dotted-Green and Brown Lines. Zero hour was 2.0 a.m.

The Thirteenth Battalion. † In preparation for these events, the Thirteenth Battalion left Ligny-en-Cambresis on October 21st for Béthencourt and next day moved up to Briastre.
October 23rd, 1918.

By zero hour on October 23rd the Battalion was in position on the line of the railway east of Briastre, and at 4.30 a.m. moved up into position behind the 15th Brigade of the 5th Division, reaching there at 6.0 a.m. The 5th Division had some trouble with enemy machine-

* During the last few weeks of the War the word "exploit" becomes very fashionable in all orders and war diaries.

† Map will be found facing p. 354.

guns but, eventually, at 10.0 a.m., the barrage opened and, at 10.15, the Battalion advanced behind it with "C" Company on the right, "A" on the left, "D" in support four hundred yards behind and "B" in reserve another four hundred yards behind "D."

All went according to plan and by 3.27 p.m. patrols were out and the line of the River St. Georges reported clear of the enemy. This line was then consolidated and at 5.15 p.m. the 1st Bn. Essex Regt. passed through.

The advance was continued the next day and all objectives taken, but the Thirteenth Battalion, having done its job, saw no more of the battle and that night went into billets in Beaurain, whence it moved next day to Neuville, where it remained until the end of the month.

Casualties during October were eight officers and one hundred and seven other ranks.*

During the same period there were awarded one Bar to the M.C., four M.C.s, three Bars to the M.M. and twenty-four M.M.s.

CROSSING THE ECAILLON RIVER.

On October 24th the attack was extended northwards and the First Battalion was again involved.

The First Battalion. † There were four objectives, but of these only two affected the Battalion. The first, the Blue Line, ran from the Maing road north of Monchaux-sur-Ecaillon, just east of that village and then for about half a mile along the road to Sommaing; the second, the Yellow Line, was on the high ground one thousand yards east of the Blue Line.

In the 4th Division the 10th Brigade was to be on the right and the 11th on the left, with the 51st Division on the left of the latter. In the 11th Brigade the 1st Bn. Somerset Light Infantry would be on the right, the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. on the left and the First Battalion in reserve. "B" and "I" Companies provided parties to carry bridges for the two leading battalions, whilst "A" and "C" provided parties for "mopping up" and consolidating the Yellow Line when captured. Zero hour was 4.0 a.m.

When the attack reached the river it was found that the two left bridges were too short and the Hampshire Regiment came under heavy fire from Monchaux; the remainder of the attackers got over, or through, the river, and the two left companies of the Hampshire Regiment crossed by bridges further to the right. The first objective was reported captured by 5.45 a.m.,

* "For the Duration," p. 140.

† Map will be found facing p. 354.

many prisoners being taken, Monchaux alone contributing more than one hundred—including the Town Major.

Meanwhile those of "B" Company, other than the bridge-parties, had been withdrawn behind the front line as soon as the assaulting troops were in position; these now moved forward and, the parties from "A" and "C" having rejoined the Battalion, consolidation of the Blue Line was proceeded with. Shelling had not been severe and casualties were light. That night the Battalion was relieved and marched back to billets in Haspres, where it remained until the 28th.

Casualties between October 20th and 24th had been:—twenty other ranks killed; Captain T. Carlyle, 2nd-Lieutenants G. A. Luker and F. R. M. Lee wounded (at duty), Lieutenant J. S. Tidball, 2nd-Lieutenants J. K. Metherell, G. A. Luker (a second time) and one hundred other ranks wounded and two missing.

THE BATTLE OF THE SAMBRE.

Before proceeding to the principal attack, which was the third and, as it proved, the final stage of the British offensive, it was decided to make a preliminary attack, having in view the capture of Valenciennes.

For this operation the XVIIth Corps of the Third Army and the XXIIInd and Canadian Corps of the First Army would be employed on a six-mile front, south of Valenciennes.

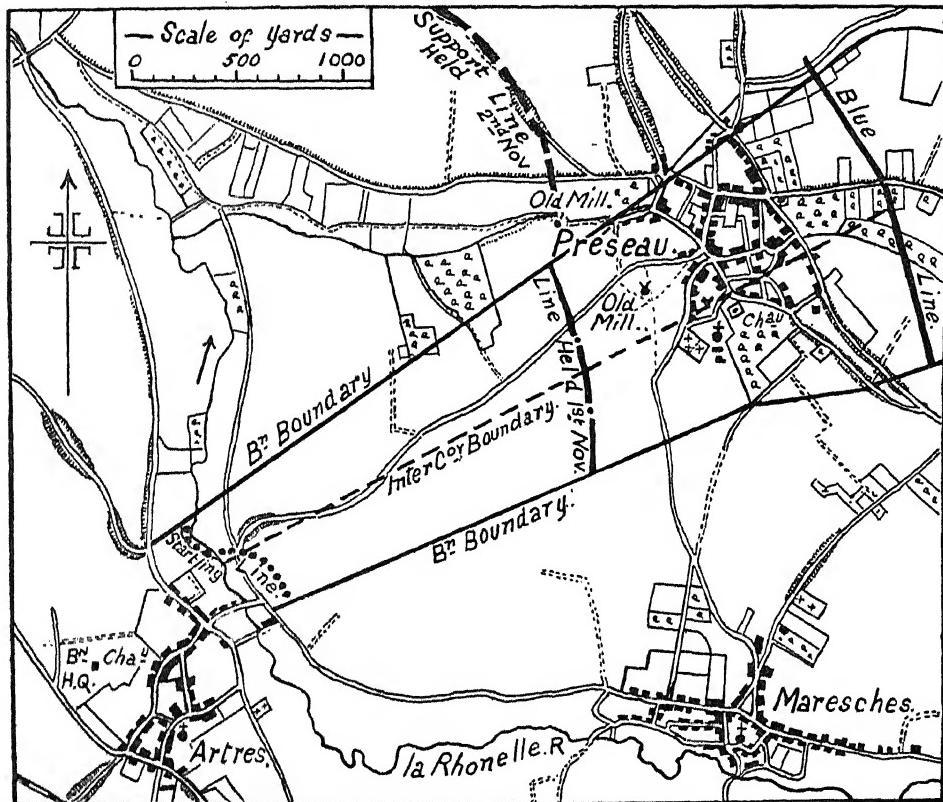
The XXIIInd Corps would attack with the 4th Division on the right and the 49th Division on the left. The 11th Brigade would lead the 4th Division as far as the first objective, the Blue Line, which ran just to the east of the village of Préseau and some two miles from the jumping-off place in the bridge-head of Artres astride the River Rhonelle; all being well the 10th Brigade would thereafter take over the front from the 11th and continue the advance to the next objective, the Green Line, on a later date.

In the 11th Brigade, the First Battalion, with one company 1st Bn. Somerset Light Infantry, would be on the right with the 61st Division, XVIIth Corps on its right and the 1st Bn. Hampshire Regt. on its left; the remainder of the Somerset Light Infantry would be in support.

The attack was expected to take place on October 30th.

The First Battalion left Haspres on October 28th and went into the line as right battalion of the 4th Division. The Battalion front included a large bridge-head east of Artres and was held with "C," "A" and "I" Companies in the line and "B" in support. On the 29th "C" Company enlarged the bridge-head by occupying some shallow trenches in front and

THE BATTLE OF THE SAMBRE.



THE FIRST BATTALION ATTACK ON PRÉSEAU.

1st-2nd November, 1918.

the Hampshire Regiment on the left pushed forward posts and also relieved "I" Company which went into support on the left of "B."

For the attack, which would be behind a barrage, "C" Company (right) and "A" (left) would first advance with "B" and "I" in support. After covering about a third of the distance to the Blue Line the barrage would halt for ten minutes and, when it moved on, "B" and "I" would go through to the objective; "C" Company would there re-organize and be prepared to push on as far as possible beyond the objective and take up an outpost position covering the whole Battalion front. "A" Company was to follow behind and "mop up" Préseau, which task being completed it would consolidate a line west of the village, relieving the company of the Somerset Light Infantry which would have begun the work. Zero hour was 5.15 a.m.

The First Battalion. The attack was twice postponed for twenty-four hours and during the period of waiting, enemy artillery and machine-gun fire was fairly heavy, so that when the November 1st, 1918. Battalion at last moved to its assembly position, in heavy rain, the troops had been subjected to considerable strain.

At dusk on the 31st, 2nd-Lieutenant R. G. Tarlton placed across the River Rhonelle four bridges for the use of the right company of the Hampshire Regiment, which, with the left platoon of "A" Company, would form up west of the river. This operation was well carried out.

At 1.0 a.m. on November 1st, companies began to move into position and at 5.15 the barrage opened; it was very good on the whole but some guns were firing short and caused about forty casualties before the Battalion was due to move.

At 5.30 a.m. the leading companies moved off, extending to the left to gain touch with the platoon which started from the west bank of the river. It was difficult to keep direction as the morning was misty and the smoke of the barrage made things worse. The two advances continued according to plan, the enemy offering some resistance during the first but little in Préseau, and the Blue Line was reached, but by this time there were no other troops on either flank.

"A" Company proceeded to "mop up" the village, a large undertaking for one company, and "B" Company of the Somerset Light Infantry, now reduced to twenty men, began to consolidate the support line.

Before the consolidation of the front line was complete and before the outpost company had got out, a strong counter-attack developed from both the north-east and south-east, the enemy getting round both flanks and entering the village from north and south. At this time "A" Company had barely completed its task and, following its orders, had joined the

Somerset Light Infantry in consolidating the support line. "B" Company, having lost all its officers early in the attack, appears to have lost direction, and very few men reached the final objective. "C" and "I" Companies, now very weak and trying to hold a line fourteen hundred yards long with the enemy all round them, fought their way back to the support line, where the remains of them joined "A" Company and the Somerset Light Infantry.

Here the counter-attack was held up, although it was some time before the artillery barrage could be brought back on to the west of the village, and touch gained with the Hampshire Regiment on the left and, later, with troops on the right.

The Battalion suffered a number of casualties from low-flying aeroplanes, of which there were some fifteen in action. As a set-off it captured nine trench-mortars and a field battery, although the latter and three of the former were lost during the counter-attack; the number of prisoners and machine-guns captured could not be estimated but about one hundred of the former escaped. That night the Battalion was relieved by the 2nd Bn. Seaforth Highlanders and moved back about one thousand yards for a few hours.

At 5.30 a.m., November 2nd, the attack was resumed by fresh troops and the Battalion moved up in support of the 1st Bn. The King's Own Regt., in the left sub-sector north of Préseau, and by 7.0 a.m. was in position in the sunken road north-west of the village with its right on the northern-most of the two Old Mills. Enemy field guns were at first active but their fire later died down and the Battalion had few casualties.

That night the First Battalion was, for the last time, relieved and marched back to billets in Haspres.

After the heavy fighting of the previous day, which was to prove its final action in the War, and the three days holding the line before the attack, all ranks were by now completely exhausted and will be left in Haspres, resting.

Casualties on November 1st had been fifty-one other ranks killed; Captain T. Carlyle,* Rev. A. J. Billings, Lieutenant H. L. Routh, 2nd-Lieutenants C. Knowles, J. H. Davies, A. E. Boyland and two hundred other ranks wounded; Captain F. H. Farmer and 2nd-Lieutenant R. Wilson wounded (at duty) and thirteen other ranks missing.

THE FINAL BLOW.

These preliminary operations on November 1st-2nd were followed by the main attack by the Fourth, Third and First Armies on a front of about

* For the second time in a week.

thirty miles from the River Sambre, north of Oisy, to Valenciennes. In this attack, which was to prove the final blow to the enemy, the Thirteenth and Third Battalions were to be engaged.

On November 4th the 37th Division, IVth Corps, was to attack due east with the 17th Division, Vth Corps, on its right, and the New Zealand Division, IVth Corps, on its left, the latter intending to encircle the walled town of Le Quesnoy. Within the 37th Division the 111th Brigade would lead the attack, having as objectives the Blue and Blue-Dotted Lines which ran roughly north and south through Louvignies-lez-Quesnoy and the Ferme de L'Hôpital, respectively, the latter being some three thousand yards distant from the assembly line. After the capture of these lines the 112th Brigade was to pass through the 111th and capture other lines "exploiting" forward through the Forêt de Mormal.

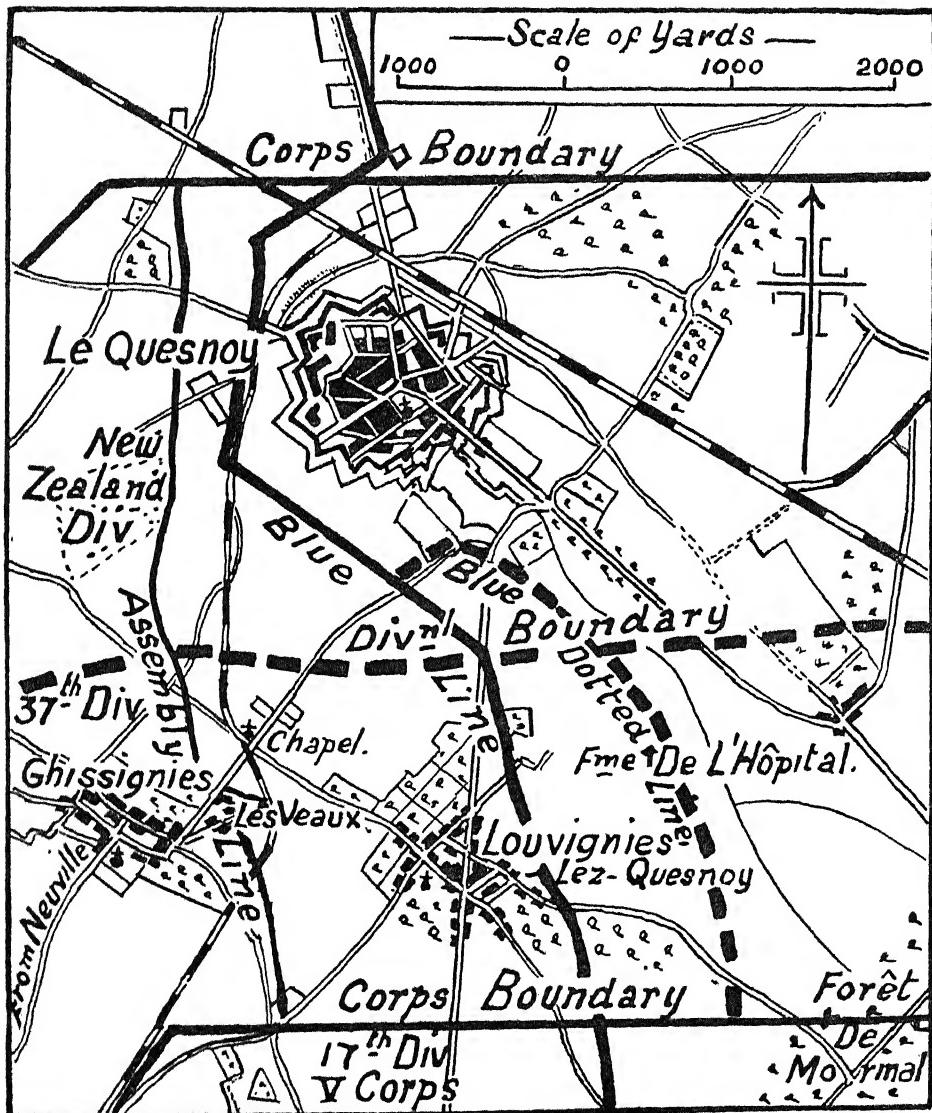
The plan of attack of the 111th Brigade was as follows :
 The Thirteenth Battalion. on the right the 13th Bn. 60th was to capture the Blue Line and "mop-up" Louvignies village, the 10th Bn. Royal Fusiliers passing through to the capture of the Blue-Dotted Line, whilst, on the left, the Thirteenth Battalion

Louvignies. November 4th, 1918. would go straight through to the latter line. The attack would be under an artillery, machine-gun and trench-mortar barrage and zero hour would be 5.30 a.m., at which time the barrage would fall, the infantry advancing four minutes later.

During the evening of November 3rd the Thirteenth Battalion left its billets at Neuville and was in its place on the assembly position by 4.45 a.m. on the 4th. This line ran from just south of Les Veaux to the cross-roads seven hundred yards north of Ghissignies village and was occupied by "D," "C" and "A" Companies, of which the latter appears to have been in support; "B" Company was in reserve in Ghissignies.

At 5.34 the leading companies advanced and "D" Company, on the right, closely supported by two platoons of "A," reached the railway, some three hundred yards distant, which was taken after fierce fighting together with twelve machine-guns and fifty prisoners. Pushing forward, it overcame all opposition and reached the Blue Line at the appointed time, which was, apparently, 7.30 a.m. During the advance machine-guns and trench-mortars were silenced and captured by various small operations, or, in some cases, by individual men. Meanwhile "C" Company, on the left, met with fierce opposition on its way to the railway; the right flank was temporarily held up, but the two left platoons, with one of "A" Company, pushed forward and joined up with "D" Company on the Blue Line. This advance was also contested, but many machine-guns and trench-mortars were captured together with another thirty or forty prisoners.

THE FINAL ADVANCE.



THE THIRTEENTH BATTALION ATTACK ON LOUVIGNIES-LEZ-QUESNOY.

4th November, 1918.

The reserve company, "B," left Ghissignies at 6.0 a.m. and moved forward to the railway; seeing that the advance was held up by machine-gun fire from a chapel near the road-rail crossing north-east of Ghissignies, the company commander organized an attack by two platoons from the south, astride the railway, and, with the kindly co-operation of a tank and a trench-mortar section, had, by 7.15 a.m., cleared up the situation with several machine-guns and seventy prisoners to his credit. The casualties in the attack on the railway had been heavy, including two company and several platoon commanders. "B" Company, with the remainder of "C" and "A," then quickly advanced to the Blue Line and, at 8.0 a.m., the advance to the Blue-Dotted Line was continued under heavy shell-fire.

The enemy opposition, however, was now broken and prisoners were giving themselves up freely; the final objective was reached by 8.50 a.m. and by 10.30 a.m. the line was consolidated, the 112th Brigade having already passed through at 9.30 a.m.

The Battalion, much depleted in numbers, held the line until 8.0 p.m., when, the 111th Brigade being withdrawn, it went back to Beaurain, having fought the last of its many fights.

Casualties on this day were Captain P. F. Davy, M.C., 2nd-Lieutenants A. Park, J. Macaulay and twenty-seven other ranks killed; Lieutenant G. S. Hunter died of wounds; 2nd-Lieutenants A. L. Cooper, W. Wallace, A. Scott and T. S. Conoley (at duty) and ninety other ranks wounded, with fourteen missing.

Although it took part in the final attack the Third Battalion was not called upon to undertake any serious fighting. On November 4th, the 24th Division attacked with the Guards Division on the right and the 19th Division on the left, its final objective being the Bavai-Bellignies main road. The 73rd Brigade led the advance, the 17th Brigade following with the Third Battalion in reserve to the 1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers and 8th Bn. The Queen's Regt.

The attack was successful and by the evening the Third Battalion had moved up from Bermerain, via Sepmeries and Maresches, to the neighbourhood of Jenlain, where it spent the night.

The next day, November 5th, the Battalion at about 12 noon went into billets near La Bois Crette, the leading battalions being held up at St. Waast. During the next thirty-six hours it rained without ceasing and the Battalion received a succession of orders which were each in turn countermanded.

At length, at 4.0 p.m. on the 6th, orders were received that the brigade

would attack at dawn the next morning, the Battalion's task being the capture of the high ground north-east of St. Waast. The C.O. and company commanders at once went up to reconnoitre but, owing to the rain and dusk, nothing could be seen.

The 24th Division, with the same divisions as neighbours, would attack at 6.0 a.m. on November 7th and the 17th Brigade issued orders to the following effect.

There would be a preliminary attack at 10 p.m. on November 6th by the 8th Bn. Queen's Regt. to secure the high ground south of St. Waast.

The 1st Bn. Royal Fusiliers would attack at 6.0 a.m. on the 7th under a barrage and secure the high ground about Bois Lapiette, the 19th Division advancing simultaneously on the left.

The task of the Third Battalion would be to "mop up" St. Waast and then, passing through the Royal Fusiliers, secure the high ground north of Bavai; it would then "mop up" that town and, establishing a line east of the town, join hands with the Guards Division on the right.

Colonel Kewley's orders to the Battalion placed "C" Company on the right and "B" on the left; "D" Company was detailed to clear St. Waast and then to connect with the left of "B" Company on the railway east of the town: "A" Company is not mentioned.

At 6.0 a.m. the Battalion attacked under a very heavy barrage and by 9.0 a.m. had reached the final objective without having encountered an enemy and having had only one casualty. The 72nd Brigade continued the advance and at 2.0 p.m. the Battalion marched to billets about Louvignies-Bavai station; which locality was heavily shelled, nine casualties resulting.

On November 8th a move was made into billets in Bavai, where one other rank was unfortunately killed.

The Third Battalion was now out of the War; having lost in casualties since November 5th eleven other ranks.

With the almost bloodless action at St. Waast the active fighting of the Regiment in France and Flanders came to an end. There remain, however, to chronicle the movements of the Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions during the closing days of operations. Although not actively employed in any of the major operations of the Final Advance, it was reserved for one of them, the Twelfth, to be the only Battalion of the Regiment actually in the line at the time of the Armistice.

At the end of October, the 20th Division was brought down to the south and on November 1st both battalions of the Regiment were billeted in

and about Cambrai. Thereafter they moved gradually behind the advancing 24th Division, passing through such places as Rieux, Avesnes, St. Aubert, and Maresches, all recently known to the Third Battalion, until on November 8th the Eleventh Battalion was at Jenlain and the Twelfth at Le Pissotau. Here, in the latter battalion, occurred the last recorded casualty in the Regiment, a shell from a high-velocity gun landing in the garden at Battalion H.Q. and, unhappily, killing Rifleman J. J. Mein, a regimental policeman.

The Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions. The Eleventh Battalion remained at Jenlain, holding on the 10th its last church parade service before the Armistice, until November 11th, when it moved to St. Waast-la-Vallée.

On the 9th, the Twelfth Battalion moved into billets in Feignies, between Bavai and Maubeuge, and on the 10th took over, from a battalion of the 24th Division, the outpost line. This line was on the high ground east of the Maubeuge-Mons road, with the main line of resistance on that road between Mairieux and Bettignies, and there, on November 11th, when the "Cease Fire" sounded, stood the Twelfth Battalion.

NOVEMBER 11TH, 1918.

It may be of interest to record here the situations of the various Battalions at the time of the Armistice.

The First Battalion stayed at Haspres until November 11th, when it marched to very comfortable billets at Curgies, on the Valenciennes-Jenlain road, carrying out small flank and advanced guard schemes on the way.

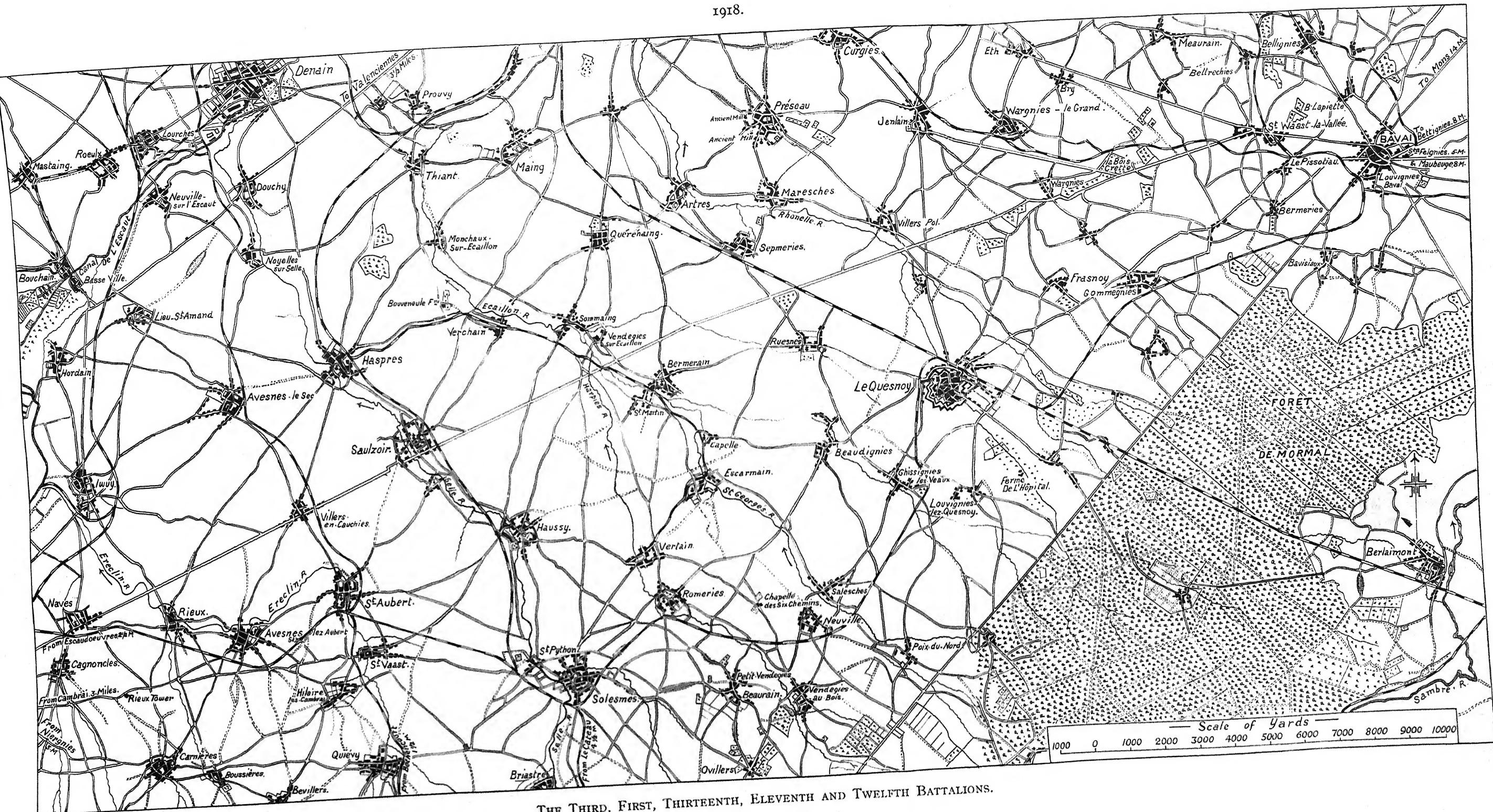
Lieutenant A. Waudby, D.C.M., the Signalling Officer, was with the Battalion at Le Cateau as a Rifleman and had served continuously with it during the whole War. Although never wounded he enjoyed among his comrades the reputation of drawing shell-fire !

The Second Battalion on October 22nd marched to Warlaing, where it remained, training and refitting, until November 4th. During this period the Band performed for the first time and thereafter played to the Battalion daily.

On November 3rd a fête was given to the inhabitants of Warlaing and proved a great success. Colonel Richardson presented the Maire with a framed coloured drawing of the Regimental Badge, receiving, in return, a bouquet. Between the 4th and the 10th the Battalion moved by stages eastwards, finally reaching Pommerceul, "amidst acclamations of populace," after a march of eighteen miles, and it was here that news of the Armistice was received on the 11th.

THE FINAL ADVANCE.

1918.



THE THIRD, FIRST, THIRTEENTH, ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH BATTALIONS.

October–November, 1918.

The Third Battalion was still at Bavai on November 11th, "Daily Routine" having been resumed in the Battalion the day before.

The Thirteenth Battalion spent the 11th moving from Beaurain to Caudry; the position of the Eleventh and Twelfth Battalions is already known.

The fact of the conclusion of an Armistice is recorded in the diary of each Battalion—concisely and without comment.

Of the Sixteenth Battalion there is little to record since it was last mentioned on August 31st. From then until November 11th it remained in the neighbourhood of Haudricourt, south-west of Aumale, first helping to construct and then living in a Malaria Reception Camp.* There it received large numbers of malarial reinforcements, whom it adopted for training and administration and was still thus employed at the time of the Armistice, an event which passes unnoticed in its diary.

It is strange that nowhere is mentioned the reaction of officers and men to an occasion of such moment. Possibly minds were incapable of grasping immediately such a stupendous fact: or, possibly, the mental attitude of General Brand's servant was common to Riflemen as a whole.

It will be recalled that on November 11th the whole of the 25th Brigade, commanded by General Brand, was billeted in Pommerœul, some ten miles west of Mons.

"I had a servant," says General Brand, "from the Second Battalion, a plumber by trade, who brought me my early morning tea together with a signal message to say that hostilities would cease at 11.0 a.m.

"Brigade H.Q. was in a fairly well-to-do Belgian house: I read the signal message, showed it to my servant, and said, 'What do you think of that?' He replied, 'The Belgian people downstairs seem very pleased about it, sir!'"

Peace was not to come, officially, for many months; but, to the troops in France and Flanders, the signing of the Armistice on November 11th, 1918, meant that the Great War was at last over.

* During the early part of the year, on the recommendation of Sir Ronald Ross, some thousands of chronic malaria cases were transferred from Macedonia to what was referred to as "a healthier front." "Macedonia," Vol. II, p. 58.

CHAPTER XII

MACEDONIA.

THE FOURTH BATTALION 1917-1919.*

1917.

AT the beginning of 1917 the Fourth Battalion was still in the line at the mouth of the River Struma and on the right flank of the long British front which stretched from the Gulf of Orfano to the River Vardar.

"Macedonia had, everyone was now beginning to realize, a very unsatisfactory climate for campaigning," † and, of the whole line the climate of the Struma Valley was the worst, although the mouth of the river had a better reputation than the higher reaches.

The War Diaries of the Fourth Battalion for the first three months of 1917 content themselves with the information "usual trenches and patrols" and, unfortunately, do not say where the trenches were nor what the patrols did; in fact the diaries do not disclose the theatre of operations in which the Battalion was serving.

The Turkish trenches were among the hills on the left bank of the Struma and the British among those on the right with bridge-heads pushed across on to the enemy side. No-Man's Land was some two miles wide and each battalion in the 80th Brigade took its turn in sending out a nightly patrol whenever the weather permitted.

The diary for April is little more informative, but for a very good reason; the ship which was conveying it home was sunk by enemy action and, when the diary was eventually salved, the action of salt water upon indelible pencil had not improved legibility.

It can be gleaned, however, that the enemy artillery was more active, that the battle-casualties for the month were nil, and that the effective strength at the end of the month was thirty-two officers and one thousand one hundred and forty-three other ranks, with a ration strength of twenty-six and nine hundred and sixty-nine respectively.‡

* General map of Macedonia will be found facing p. 370.

† The Official Account, "Macedonia," Vol. I, p. 261.

‡ The War Diary of the 80th Brigade for February is a "Certified True Copy in lieu of original lost at Sea." It records that on February 21st the "Princess Alberta" was tor-

In the meanwhile the Battle of Doiran had been fought by the XIIth Corps on April 24th and May 8th and the XVIth Corps (to which the 27th Division belonged) had undertaken operations on the Struma on May 12th. The action of both corps was in co-operation with an offensive by the French and Serbian forces west of the Vardar which, however, was a failure : General Sarrail, accordingly, called a halt and the operations came to an end. The 80th Brigade took no part in these operations, so the Fourth Battalion was not involved. With a view to preventing the transference of enemy troops there appears to have been a combined shoot on May 12th between the artillery of the 27th Division and the 6th Detached Squadron R.N. under Captain C. M. Staveley, C.M.G., R.N. It may be mentioned here that to the Fourth Battalion the presence of this squadron in the Gulf of Orfano was a god-send as much from a social as from a military point of view, the Royal Navy extending its proverbial hospitality to all ranks. Nor was it the Battalion only that enjoyed this hospitality, for, week by week, the Brigade Diary records the arrival of some notability, from Corps H.Q. or elsewhere, who invariably spent part of his week-end afloat "examining the enemy position."

After the failure of this offensive General Milne decided to evacuate the Struma Valley during the unhealthy summer months and drew back the XVIth Corps to the hills west of the river, but this move did not affect the 80th Brigade, which remained where it was.

The tangled situation between the Allies and the Greeks was now at last about to be unravelled. The story is too long and too complicated to be recorded here ; it is given in detail in the Official Account.* Suffice it that King Constantine and the Royalist party were pro-Central Powers because they anticipated that the latter would prove victorious in the Great War ; M. Venizelos and the National Party held the contrary opinion and favoured the Allied cause. At a Conference held in London at the end of May the Allied Governments decided to demand the abdication of King Constantine and to send troops to the Isthmus of Corinth and the Piræus to keep order during the change of regime.

The British Army was to be represented by parts of two battalions, of which one was to consist of the Fourth Battalion, less two companies, with a strength fixed at one hundred and seventy-six all ranks per company.

On May 25th, 1917, orders were received for this party to proceed to

pedoed near Mudros, having on board the 80th Brigade leave party, of whom two officers and twenty-nine other ranks were drowned, including seven of the Fourth Battalion.

* "Macedonia," Vol. I, pp. 348 *et seq.*

Salonika on special duty and on the 27th H.Q. with "B" and "D" Companies entrained at Tasli, three miles from the mouth of the Struma, en route for Salonika. Colonel Gathorne-Hardy having gone on leave, the party, strength eleven officers and four hundred and one other ranks, was commanded by Major H. G. Moore-Gwyn, M.C.

At the Piræus. "British Detachment Gwyn." June, 1917.

The party detrained near the east end of the Rendina Gorge, close to Stavros, and went into camp for the night. Next day by march and lorry the journey was continued and Karaissi rest camp, three miles north of Salonika, was reached at 4.0 p.m. The Battalion, for such it was less the two detached companies, remained in this camp carrying out training and route-marches whilst assimilating various details such as A.S.C. and R.A.M.C. personnel until June 11th, when orders were received for embarkation. During the night of June 12th/13th * the column was embarked in the Greek ship "Vasiliefs Constantine," the embarkation being very slow owing to the French facilities being indifferent.

In addition to the British column, which was accommodated aft, there were seven hundred Russian troops on board, in the forward part of the ship, whose accommodation was good, but communications and gangways bad ; fresh water also was very short.

On the morning of the 13th the ship left harbour escorted by three French destroyers and one German aeroplane ; † there was an alarm that night that a submarine had been sighted, but eventually the ship next morning entered harbour at the Piræus and at 2.0 p.m. went alongside the military quay. Major Moore-Gwyn, whose force was now known officially as "British Detachment Gwyn," received verbal orders to disembark the troops at once and General Monterou explained the situation and the positions to be occupied by the detachment. These were H.Q. and one company ("D") at St. Helias, a hill about a mile east of the quay and overlooking the harbour of Piræus, where a section of the 58th French Regiment would be relieved, and one company ("B") occupying the Douane. "D" Company was distributed with two platoons on the northern slopes of the hill overlooking Athens, one platoon and one Lewis-gun on the southern slopes overlooking Piræus, and one platoon in a fort which was found to be manned by five Greek sailors and armed with two Krupp 6-inch guns (without breech-blocks).

The Detachment was tactically under the orders of General Monterou, G.O.C. Infantry, and, from the administrative point of view, under General

* King Constantine had abdicated and left Athens on June 12th.

† The aerial portion of the escort does not appear to have attempted interference with the naval portion—or *vice-versa*.

Castaign, commanding the 30th French Division. The company at St. Helias began to dig in and arrangements were made for the Douane company to send out four patrols by day and four by night, each patrol consisting of an officer and some twenty men. At this time any relations with the inhabitants were forbidden.

Work on the trenches continued daily and the Detachment was visited by various officials, naval and military; being inspected on the 18th by General Regnault, Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Piræus.

On the 25th the 30th French Divisional H.Q. suddenly disappeared, but was found subsequently in the fort of the Acropolis and communication with it re-established.

On June 29th permission was given for officers to go to Athens and on July 1st to officers and men to visit Athens and Piræus. Lieutenant C. E. Temperley, who was adjutant of the Detachment, relates that bathing parties were organized in the beautiful island-dotted sea, whilst visits were exchanged with ships of the Royal Navy, including H.M.S. "Implacable," Flagship of Rear-Admiral Hayes-Sadler.

Another visit recorded is that of some representatives of the Japanese Navy who called at the fort. Before leaving they left a card of introduction for a return visit but, on its presentation, the callers were conducted forward, their friends proving to be A.B.s. They were, however, hospitably entertained in the mess-deck and, subsequently, in the Ward Room also. Colonel Gathorne-Hardy arrived on July 6th and the next day Major Moore-Gwyn left for Salonika.

Representative parties attended various social functions and also a review in the Athens Stadium.

Unfortunately this pleasant interlude could not go on for ever and on July 18th the Detachment entrained in four trains and left for Salonika.

At Larissa the trains were joined up to make two and eventually Tudulas was reached in the small hours of the 20th, the Detachment marching to Karaissi Camp. Here on July 22nd it was inspected by the Commander-in-Chief and next day left by march route for the Struma. Marching by night, it reached the Stavros area on the 27th and, on the 29th, moved by train to Tasli; the story of "British Detachment Gwyn" is finished.

In the meanwhile, for the two companies left behind, life had continued along the same monotonous lines. Work of various kinds was carried out, also the usual patrolling. The ever-present malaria receives little notice in the Battalion diary except that the numbers on duty in the front line

were reduced to a minimum in order to withdraw as many men as possible from the low ground near the Struma ; brushwood, also, within two hundred yards of bivouacs, was burnt and mosquito-proof netting and gloves were issued. Unfortunately, as had been the case in 1916, supply of these was late and some damage was done before their issue.

During June it was believed that Bulgars had relieved the 50th Turkish Division on the lower Struma, the latter proceeding to the Palestine front ; in any case, by July the Turks had, without doubt, gone.

On July 9th an 80th Brigade section of Mounted Infantry was formed, its duties being to patrol the lake and river front ; it consisted of two officers mounted on horses and thirty other ranks on mules.

On the night of July 15th/16th the Fourth Battalion and 4th Bn. 60th relieved the 2nd Bn. King's Shropshire Light Infantry and 3rd Bn. 60th, respectively, in the bridge-head position on the left bank of the River Struma. For this purpose two provisional companies were formed : " X " Company being composed of Nos. 9 and 10 Platoons of " C " Company with the details of " B," and " Y " Company of Nos. 11 and 12 Platoons with the details of " D." " A " Company, apparently, remained intact in reserve.

On the 29th, as has been seen, Battalion H.Q. with " B " and " D " Companies arrived at Tasli, rejoining the companies in the bridge-head early in August. This month and September were uneventful and on October 18th-19th the Battalion was relieved by the 2nd Bn. K.S.L.I. and went back into rest camps.

On November 5th a warning order was received that the 80th Brigade was at last to leave the mouth of the Struma, where it had been since July

Move to Tahinos. November, 1917. 1916, and to change places with the 82nd Brigade above Lake Tahinos. The relief was to be a long and tedious business, as not more than one half-battalion was to be absent from the present 80th Brigade area at one time. The move began on November 10th when H.Q. and " A " and " D " Companies started off, followed on the 14th by the remainder of the Battalion. The march was carried out in three stages and, by November 29th, the Battalion had taken over the new line from the 2nd Bn. D.C.L.I. and Lovat's Scouts.

It is difficult to give an accurate description of the line and the method of holding it as no information is given in the Brigade or Battalion war diaries. The Brigade line appears to have run for some fifteen thousand yards from near Fitoki, south of the Struma, to a point one mile north-east of Komarjan. The front was divided into two sub-sectors ; No. I, on the

right, one battalion holding the river line with one company and three in reserve, and No. II with one battalion holding the Gudeli bridge-head with three companies and one in reserve; one battalion was in brigade reserve and there was a brigade "patrol company" on the left of the line.

It is not clear where the Battalion went except that "B" Company became the patrol company.

The brigade relief was not complete until December 11th, on which date the 80th Brigade received a signal from Captain Staveley and the 6th Detached Squadron:

"Deeply regret parting company with 80th Brigade after two such happy years together and wish them all good luck and a happy Christmas and a victorious New Year."

In this line the Fourth Battalion finished, without recorded incident, the year 1917.*

1918.

The first three months of 1918 were spent in this line, the Fourth Battalion taking its turn in both sub-sectors and at work whilst in reserve. Now, however, a turn of the politico-military wheel was to cause another move.

Three divisions of the Greek "Corps of National Defence" had for some time been in the line, on the right bank of the River Vardar, but now it was considered that the state of training of a "Royal Army" division was sufficiently advanced and the 1st (Larissa) Division joined the XVIth Corps. This had the effect of displacing the 80th Brigade, which was moved northwards to relieve the 85th, which in turn was to relieve the 79th.

Thus it was that on March 30th the Battalion was relieved by two battalions of the Greek 5th Regiment and, on the 31st, was in billets in Orljak, where it was in corps reserve.

The first part of April was spent in training and the construction of a summer camp, whilst opportunity was taken of holding battalion sports.

The Orljak sector, in which the 80th Brigade now was, is thus described by Lieutenant Temperley:—

"The position in the Struma Valley was that we held the western hills, the flat ground up to the river and bridge-heads beyond the river, while the Bulgars held the hills to the east of the river. The plain is about ten miles across and there were, therefore, about eight miles of No-Man's Land

* On December 22nd General Guillaumat succeeded General Sarrail as Allied Commander-in-Chief.

beyond the river which was covered by the guns of both parties from the hills and was, therefore, usually empty."

It may be noted here that when General Guillaumat came to assume command in Macedonia he brought with him instructions from the French Government and also various notes upon them written by General Foch, at that time Chief of the General Staff under the French Government.

On April 4th General Guillaumat received a message from General Foch, who by then had become Generalissimo on the Western Front, suggesting the desirability of operations in the Balkans to pin down Bulgar forces and prevent their use as reinforcements on the Western Front.*

The Fourth Battalion was now to be concerned with one such operation.

G.H.Q. had received orders that every effort was to be made on all fronts to harass the enemy and obtain information as to his designs. The plan of the XVIth Corps was to occupy a forward line on the left bank of the Struma which was to include, so far as the 80th Brigade was concerned,

The Affair of Prosenik. the villages of Kalendra and Prosenik on the Salonika-Constantinople railway. From that line active offensive April 14th-15th, 1918. patrolling and small raids were to be carried out against the enemy's outpost line; the principle of defence to be

that this line would not be held *à outrance* against a general Bulgar attack but should be capable of resisting small isolated attacks.

The aims of this operation by the 27th Division were :—

(a) To capture prisoners, both during the advance to the line named, and afterwards by means of ambushes and patrol activity "further forward on or from the front line." †

(b) To make the enemy think that the appearance of guns on the left bank of the Struma indicated preparations for a forward move and so to induce him to send forward strong reconnaissance patrols.

‡ The operations would be divided into two distinct phases :—

First Phase. Secrecy, concealment and ambushes.

Second Phase. (When discovery of our dispositions had been made.)

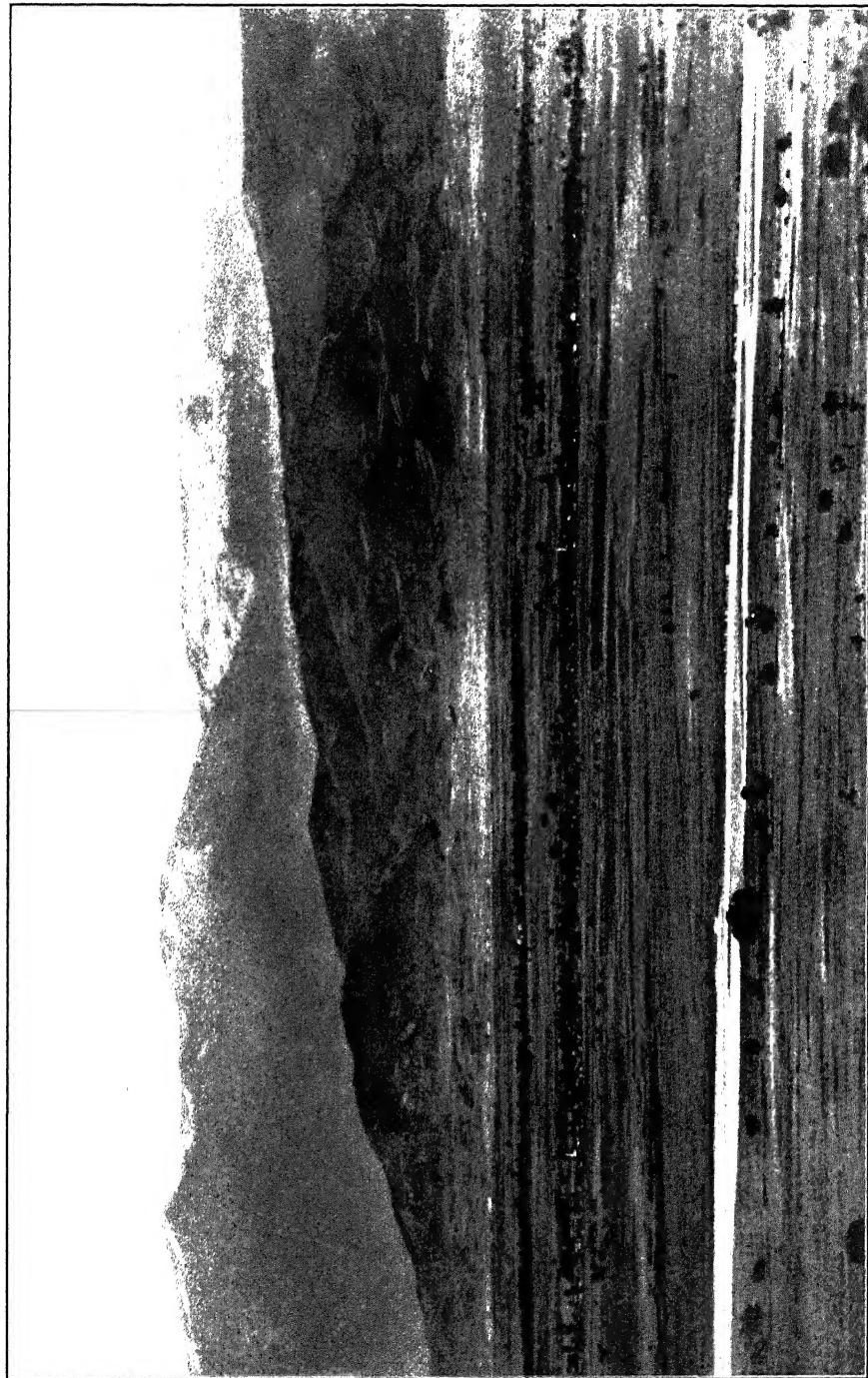
Defence against strong attack and protection from shell-fire according to the probable period of occupation.

The instructions elaborate the method of carrying out these phases and direct that, during the first phase, in order to effect concealment, wire, other than a trip-wire or two, would not be put out and that only such digging should be carried out as would ensure concealment.

* "Macedonia," 1918, Vol. II.

† 27th Division Instructions.

‡ Ibid.



MACEDONIA—THE STRUMA VALLEY.

1918.

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The operation was to begin on the night April 14th/15th.

* Colonel Gathorne-Hardy issued orders on the following lines. "A" Company, less Lewis-gun teams, would move forward at 8.0 p.m. from the British wire east of the Struma and, after clearing Topalova and Prosenik, would form a screen round the northern and eastern sides of the latter village, with its flanks on the railway line, which was here rather more than six miles from the Struma at Orljak bridge.

"B" Company, less two platoons and Lewis-gun teams, would follow in rear of "A" and, on Prosenik being reported clear, would proceed to its position where it would dig platoon trenches about four hundred yards south-east of Prosenik church, establishing a post on the south side of West Culvert. "C" Company, less two platoons and Lewis-gun teams, would act similarly, digging platoon trenches astride the railway outside the north-west corner of Prosenik. Each company would be responsible for its flank, south and west of the railway, respectively.

At 8.0 p.m. Battalion H.Q., "D" Company, and the remaining platoons of "B" and "C," with all the Lewis-guns of those companies, would cross Orljak bridge and move to Topalova, where H.Q. and "D" Company would remain, the parties of "B" and "C" going straight on to rejoin their companies at Prosenik. At 2.30 a.m. on the 15th "A" Company would withdraw to Topalova.

"B" and "C" Companies would establish observation posts by day to watch the approaches to Prosenik; these were to be reduced to a minimum and to remain invisible.

By midnight, April 14th, the Battalion was in position as enjoined in the above orders.

By 4.0 a.m., April 15th, signal communication was established between Battalion H.Q. and all companies and at 5.0 a.m. all was reported quiet. About 6.15 a.m. "B" Company reported verbally that enemy movement could be heard in Prosenik and then that desultory rifle fire had been opened from the village, but, as no enemy could be seen, no reply was being made; some enemy bombs also had been thrown but had fallen short, whilst No. 5 Platoon Lewis-gun opened fire with effect on a party of the enemy trying to cross the railway sixty or seventy yards to the right, and "C" Company engaged others in the centre of the village with rifle-grenades.

At 7.0 a.m. the enemy began shelling Top Crossing, fire gradually moving down towards "B" Company; at the same time an observation post of this company near the church was cut off; one wounded survivor rejoining

his company three hours later.* At this time hostile artillery fire opened on "C" Company's position and a line of Bulgars in extended order was seen advancing on that company from the north. Soon after 7.0 a.m. telephone communication with "B" and "C" was broken and was never re-established, the lines being repaired repeatedly and, as frequently, cut once more. At 10.0 a.m. Colonel Gathorne-Hardy sent a message by runner to O.C. "D" Company ordering him to inform "C" Company that, if heavily attacked, it should fall back on "D."

At 11.0 a.m. a runner from "C" Company arrived at Battalion H.Q. to say that shelling was heavy but that, so far, there were no casualties; this was confirmed by another runner at 12.25 p.m., who brought a nil casualty report from "C" Company, signed by Captain Millar.

At 2.30 p.m. the enemy opened heavy rifle and machine-gun fire on "C" Company's trenches from the railway station, north of the village, 2nd-Lieutenant G. Hannam being wounded—the first casualty to be reported; the fire pinned "C" Company to its trenches and prevented the men putting their heads over the parapet. Shortly before 3.0 p.m. the C.O. sent another message to "C" Company repeating the sense of his message of 10.0 a.m. At 3.30 p.m. the enemy bombed and rushed "C" Company's left trench, and the garrison, No. 12 Platoon, in attempting to fall back on No. 11 were caught in the open by machine-gun fire from the railway station and suffered severely. About 4.0 p.m. No. 11 Platoon drove off a small party of Bulgars which attempted to rush it and, at about the same time, wounded men arriving at Battalion H.Q. reported that "C" Company was in a tight corner.

Two platoons of "D" Company were ordered to be ready to counter-attack, but this never took place as more wounded men reported that "C" Company had been rushed and was completely out of action; this, apparently, happened at about 4.30 p.m.

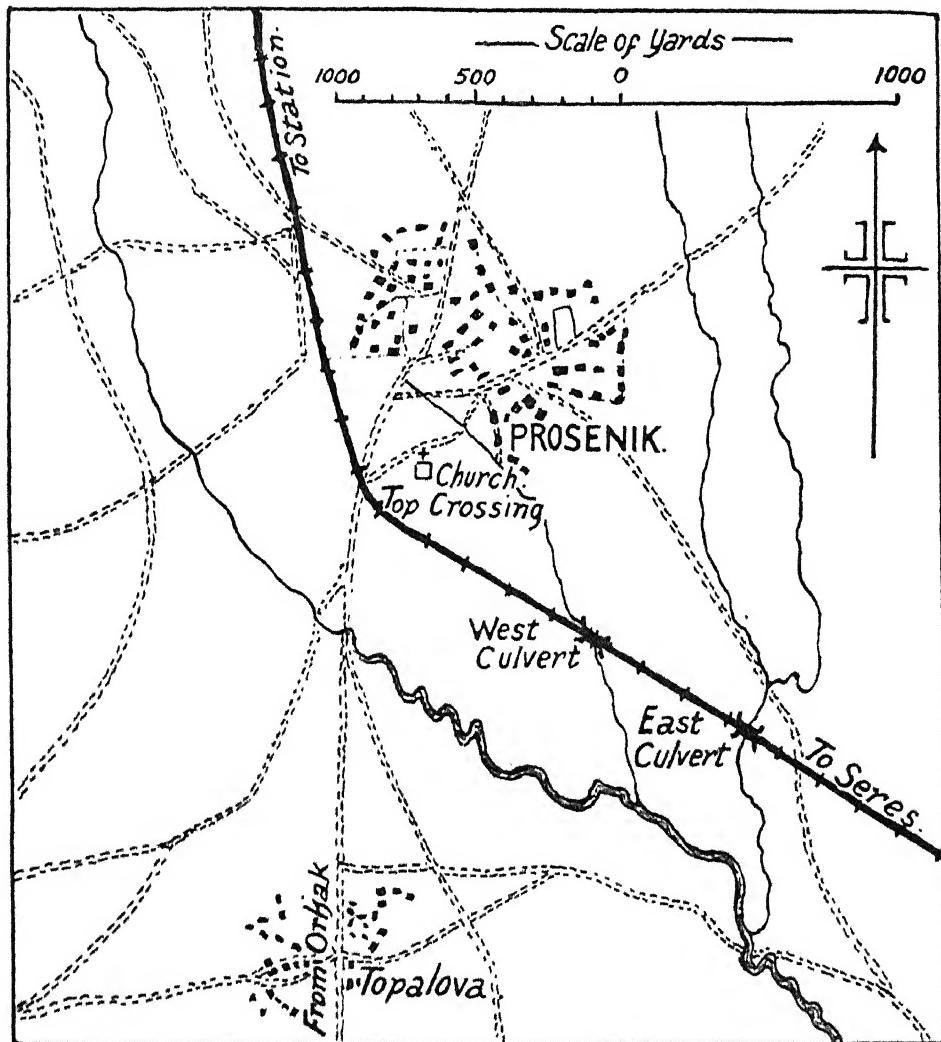
Lieutenant R. Palk, the acting adjutant, was later sent up to find out the situation and order "B" Company to fall back; he found "C" Company's position in the hands of the enemy, estimated at three hundred men, and ordered the withdrawal of "B." This was carried out, supported by two platoons of "A," on to whose position "B" Company withdrew.

At 7.30 p.m. dispositions were made for the all-round defence of Topalova.

Casualties in "C" Company had been Captain A. L. Millar, one W.O. and five other ranks killed; Lieutenant J. A. Read and 2nd-Lieutenant G. Hannam wounded and missing with ninety-six other ranks missing; in

* This appears to have been the only post found by either company to watch the village between them.

MACEDONIA—THE STRUMA VALLEY.



THE FOURTH BATTALION—THE AFFAIR OF PROSENIK.

14th-15th April, 1918.

the remainder of the Battalion there were fourteen other rank casualties.

So ended an unfortunate day. The Official Account * infers that the divisional instructions regarding concealment and defence had led company officers to pay undue regard to the former at the expense of the latter.

The Battalion remained about Topalova until the night of April 18th/19th, when it withdrew to billets in Orljak, the operations being at an end.

Until May 15th the Battalion remained at Orljak working and training. At this time the 27th Division was planning as well as it could for the recreation of all ranks and arrangements were made for many competitions, two troupes of "Follies" and a Divisional Horse Show later in the summer.

On May 8th, Colonel Gathorne-Hardy left for France and Lieut.-Colonel H. G. M. Railston, D.S.O., assumed command. On May 14th the new commanding officer won the Senior Officers' furlong race in the brigade races, and on the 15th the Battalion took over the Redoubt Line, as the outpost line was called. Until the end of the month there were constant rumours of attack by the Bulgars, but nothing resulted.

On June 1st a Bulgar deserter reported that Kumli was occupied and it was decided to raid the village. On the night of the 2nd the Battalion was relieved and the C.O. with two companies went to Elisan and thence to Kumli, which proved to be unoccupied. "D" Company was posted east and H.Q. and "C" Company north of the village; at about 4.30 a.m. small parties of Bulgars entered the village from the north-east and got behind "C" Company who chased them back through the village to "D." The latter company took four prisoners, the remainder escaping.

Leaving "D" Company at Elisan as Brigade Patrol Company, the remainder of the Battalion went back to camp at Fusilier Ridge, south of Turbes.

On June 15th there was another threatened Bulgar attack and the Battalion received sudden orders to man the river line; the attack, however, miscarried owing to a mutiny in the Bulgar ranks, and on the 18th the Battalion took over the outpost line from the 3rd Bn. 60th.†

At this time the arrival in the line of another Greek division and H.Q. Greek Ist Corps entailed a shuffle of the whole XVIth Corps and the 27th Division was under orders to relieve the French 122nd Division west of the

* "Macedonia," Vol. II, p. 85.

† On June 18th General Franchet D'Esperey became Allied Commander-in-Chief vice General Guillaumat.

Vardar. On June 25th the Battalion was relieved by the 1st Bn. Greek 34th Regiment and went back to Kilo 71 on the Salonika-Seres road.

The last eight or nine days of the month were very hot and mosquitoes prevalent, resulting in one hundred and thirty-four cases of sickness being evacuated—mostly malaria. It should be remembered that practically everyone suffered from malaria in varying degree ; it was not until a man could no longer carry on at duty that he went sick and was evacuated.

Whilst commanding the battalion of Scottish Horse, Colonel Railston had collected a pack of hounds, and this, to the extent of eight couples and two pups, joined the Fourth Battalion during June. In his private diary there is frequent mention of excellent hunts with them and, later in the year when the temperature demanded it, one or more hounds served him as extra bedding.

On July 5th the Battalion moved by lorry to Guvezne, fifteen miles north-east of Salonika, where the men had hot baths, beer, and a cinema show, and next day by rail to Kilo 67 on the Salonika-Guevgeli railway. Thence it marched to camp and, on the 9th, took over as brigade reserve from a battalion of the 2nd (bis) Zouave Regiment de Marche in the Cretes Rocheuses sector.

The country here was very different from that of the Struma and observation was excellent. It consisted of rocky hills with the opposing lines of trenches sometimes as close as two hundred yards apart. In the centre of the line was a large rocky fortress called Roche Noir, full of loopholes and within three hundred yards of our trenches. Colonel Railston was told that every gun and machine-gun had "had a go" at the loopholes but without success. On July 27th the Battalion relieved the 2nd Bn. K.S.L.I. in the front line. There was a certain amount of shelling in the sector and the rocky nature of the ground led to many splinters ; no casualties, however, appear to have resulted.

On the 30th the Bulgars put down a barrage of artillery and machine-guns, but the only casualties appear to have been among a patrol of their own which was in No-Man's Land.

On the 31st the Battalion sent out a large patrol which came into touch with the enemy and, in the ensuing fight, one rifleman was mortally wounded, Captain H. L. Baggallay and five other ranks wounded, whilst one man was missing.

To malaria was now added Spanish influenza, the two combined leading to five officer and one hundred and fifty-seven other rank admissions to hospital during the month of July, which left the Battalion with a strength,

presumably ration, of thirty-one officers and five hundred and ninety-nine other ranks.

August was spent in the same sector, the name of which had now become the Raviné sector, but not much of incident is recorded. Shelling was fairly constant, at times heavy, and sickness continued to levy its toll, although to a lesser extent than in July; so reduced in strength was the Battalion that the two companies in front line had to be reinforced from those behind and, on one company relieving another, men of the outgoing company were perforce left with the incoming. Thus few men spent more than a week out of the front line and, when in it, were on duty three days out of four. There was practically no rain during the month and the last ten days were exceedingly hot. Altogether an uncomfortable and depressing month, which left the Battalion with twenty officers and five hundred and four other ranks, battle casualties having numbered twenty-one.

The time was now approaching for the great final offensive in the Balkans. Of the steps leading up to it the Official Account * gives a detailed story which for obvious reasons cannot be attempted here. Suffice it that the French had always wanted an offensive and the British Government and War Office had always been against one, although General Milne considered that there was a probability of a success if sufficient reinforcements of men and artillery were sent to him. Eventually General Guillaumat, now in France, persuaded the British and Italian Governments and, on August 3rd, the military representatives of France, Great Britain, Italy and the United States at the Supreme War Council gave a grudging consent to preparations being carried out, but with the proviso that no reinforcements would be forthcoming.

The main plan is now well known; the Serbian First and Second Armies and the French would deliver the chief blow whilst the British forces, with two Greek divisions, would make a secondary attack on the high ground between Lake Doiran and the Vardar with the intention of holding down the enemy on this front and of clearing the railway in the Vardar Valley.

The Final Offensive. As a preliminary the 27th Division was on September 1st to make good ground opposite its front. Wire-cutting and other preparations had been in progress for more

than a fortnight when, at 5.30 p.m., the attack was launched by the 10th Bn. Hampshire and 2nd Bn. Gloucester Regts. through the Battalion front. The action of the Battalion was confined to carrying parties of fifty men from each of "B" and "D" Companies working behind the assaulting battalions. The attack was a complete success and the carrying-parties

* "Macedonia," Vol. II.

each made four journeys from our old front line to that of the Bulgar, losing, during the process, nine other ranks wounded.

After the attack, on relief by the 82nd Brigade, the Battalion went back a couple of miles and, the next morning, September 2nd, another two to camp near Dreveno, where there was a free issue of two pints of beer per man.

For many months much ground was to be covered and many strange places visited, but with actual fighting the Fourth Battalion had now finished.

The Battalion remained at Dreveno until the 20th working and doing a little training whilst the sick figures mounted ever higher. During this period the Commander-in-Chief presented the Military Cross to 2nd-Lieutenant A. M. Kirk and the D.C.M. to Serjeant Mead.

On the 16th the Battalion was prepared to move "on all possible scales of transport" and, on the same day, Colonel Railston, who had had fever for some time, was compelled to go to hospital; before going he arranged with his groom to meet him with his horses in case the Battalion was ordered forward. Major W. H. Kennett, M.C., assumed command.

On the 20th sudden orders were received to move up to the old front line and on the 22nd the move forward was begun and continued by stages until, on the 26th, Rabrovo, north of Valandovo and on the Kosturino road, was reached. As the Battalion advanced signs of confusion in the enemy's retreat increased and large quantities of stores of all kinds were found abandoned. On the 28th a car carrying the white flag and three Bulgarian envoys passed the camp en route for British G.H.Q.

On September 30th a message was received stating that hostilities with Bulgaria would cease at noon—as a result of "the Convention."

Meanwhile sickness had been very serious and the Battalion was now reduced to two companies each of three platoons; in fact it was intended shortly to re-organize the whole Brigade as one battalion of three companies.

While battle-casualties in the Battalion during the month had been one man died of wounds and nine wounded, sick admissions to hospital were thirteen officers and three hundred and thirty-four other ranks; leaving a strength of seventeen officers and two hundred and forty-one other ranks.

On the 23rd Colonel Railston rejoined, having broken out of hospital and met his horses "according to plan."

From October 1st to the 15th the Battalion remained at Rabrovo working daily and in all weathers on the Kosturino road.

On the 16th the march was resumed and by the 20th the pass from the Vardar Valley to the Strumica had been crossed and the course of the latter followed down to Krnovo at its junction with the Struma, north of

the Rupel Pass ; off again on the 25th, by the end of the month the Battalion was in bivouac in the outskirts of Kocherinovo.

In Bulgaria. The weather had now definitely broken and cold and wet caused much hardship ; supply arrangements also were difficult and no bread or fresh meat were issued for five weeks, whilst there was only one blanket a man. On the other hand, the C.O. was lucky enough to find a flock of turkeys in a Bulgarian village and bought one hundred of them for the Battalion. Sickness had not been so severe, chiefly for the reason that only the toughest men were left, but at the end of the month the strength was no more than fourteen officers and two hundred and seventy-one other ranks.

On November 1st the Battalion marched to Dsupnica, there being snow on the hills nearly down to the level of the valley. The snow having broken down all bridges, movement forward was impracticable, so the Battalion spent a day at Dsupnica, which was a fairly large town with shops. It being market-day everyone was in the gayest clothes and it must have been a pleasant change after the past weeks. All the Battalion money

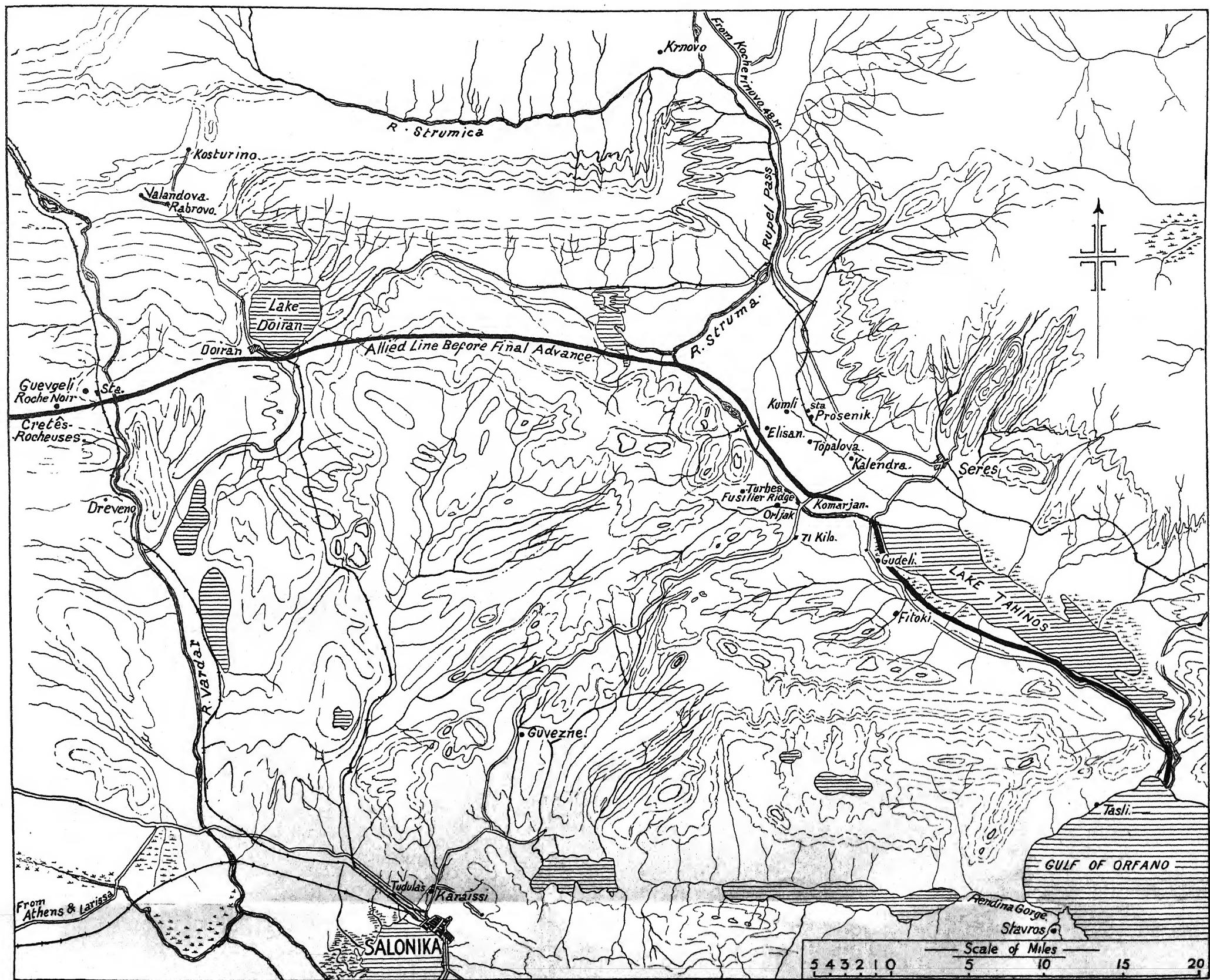
Back in Macedonia. having been changed into Bulgarian currency, orders were received to entrain next day, November 3rd, and proceed by Decauville railway to south of the Rupel Pass—back in Macedonia !

Space forbids a detailed account of the further movements during the month, but by the 25th the Battalion was at Rates and Gugunci and finished the month there. There was now deep snow and no winter clothing had been received, but beer and other canteen stores had been obtained for the men.

On the 27th Colonel Railston had been told that the Division was soon to embark for the Black Sea, but he himself left the Battalion to go home on leave on December 2nd and Major Kennett assumed command.

On December 16th the Fourth Battalion embarked in H.T. "Katoomba," with the Transport on board H.T. "Kandy," and, after lying off Constantinople for the day of the 19th, disembarked on the 23rd at Batum and went into camp on the southern outskirts of the town, moving next day into the Russian Civil Hospital. A control post was established on the road leading south from Batum to prevent Turks carrying off loot and all cars and lorries from leaving the town ; at this time the Turkish army was being withdrawn as ships became available. On December 30th the Battalion entrained at short notice, with all kit and fourteen days' rations, for Tiflis, where it was to come under the 27th Division direct.

MACEDONIA.
1917-1918.



THE FOURTH BATTALION.

On the last day of 1918 the ration strength had risen to twenty-one officers and six hundred and twenty other ranks.

1919.

On January 1st, 1919, the Battalion arrived at Tiflis. There was some trouble with the railway officials who, apparently, were acting under the orders of the Georgian Government, but eventually detrainment was completed and "D" Company went to the Majestic Hotel, whilst the remainder of the Battalion occupied the Seminary, recently used as barracks by German troops.

On the 6th "C" Company left for Sadakhlo, on the Alexandropol railway, to police the area between the armies of the Georgian and Armenian Governments. On the 10th Captain C. E. Temperley, with the local rank of lieutenant-colonel, proceeded to Kars as Military Governor of the province and "B" Company accompanied him as escort.

On January 21st the Battalion followed "B" Company to Kars and found various small parties at points on the railway between that place and Alexandropol, to guard stores left by the Russians on their retirement, and also on large munition dumps in the neighbourhood.

The whole country was now under snow and authority was given for six blankets per man and a double fuel ration.

The snow was to prove the chief subject of preoccupation during most of February, the outlying posts being entirely cut off for some time, despite efforts to reach them by sleigh and to clear the railway line with snow-ploughs and local labour; as a fact no train arrived at Kars from Tiflis between February 7th and 23rd, on which date the thermometer reached 17 degrees "below." Turks and local civilians gave some little trouble to guards over stores and dumps, but gained no advantage—in fact rather the reverse.

Demobilization had now begun and on February 28th the strength had dropped to twelve officers and four hundred and four other ranks.

On March 2nd, Colonel Temperley exchanged the post of Military Governor of Kars for that of Erivan and, on the 5th, all Turkish troops left Kars.

On the 24th the local inhabitants forced an entrance into an arm-store guarded by Russian police and looted rifles and knives. A party from the Battalion with a troop of Lothians and Border Horse disarmed the looters, who suffered a few casualties.

There were one or two cases of small-pox in the Battalion and, during the month, No. S/10138 Rifleman W. Bell unfortunately died—the last

recorded death in the Fourth Battalion ; he was buried in a Russian cemetery at Kars.

By the 31st the strength was ten officers and three hundred and fifty other ranks.

Signs of a move were now beginning, and, on April 11th, all guards in Kars, except that on the Residency, were relieved by the 1st/23rd Sikh Pioneers and the 2nd/6th Gurkha Rifles.

On the 12th the Battalion took part in a round-up of a member of the South-West Caucasus Government and various other inhabitants of Kars ; during the process five civilians were killed and one Rifleman slightly wounded by a revolver bullet—the last battle-casualty in the Regiment.

On the 21st orders were received that the Battalion would proceed to Tiflis and thence to Batum to be reduced to a cadre, which would be sent home.

On the 26th and 29th the Battalion left Kars for Tiflis, whilst some of its detachments were sent direct to Batum, for which place the Battalion left on May 1st, arriving there on the 3rd.

On the 15th the Battalion was reduced to cadre, with a strength of seven officers and thirty-three other ranks, all surplus personnel being handed over to the 10th Bn. Devonshire Regt.

Finally, on June 5th, the Fourth Battalion cadre embarked at Batum for home.

CHAPTER XIII

1918-1919—DEMOBILIZATION—THE WATCH ON THE RHINE.

THE First Battalion remained at Curgies until the end of the year. Training, chiefly ceremonial, occupied the mornings, with one hour devoted to the newly-instituted "Educational Training," whilst games and sports filled in the afternoon.* On November 20th Major R. T. Fellowes rejoined, as second-in-command, the Battalion which he had commanded for two years from August, 1916.

During November and December there were awarded in the First Battalion three M.C.s, three D.C.M.s, one Bar to the M.M. and ten M.M.s.

On November 12th the Second Battalion marched six miles north-east to Baudour and on the 16th moved by lorry and march-route to Rumes, in the Tournai area, which it reached on the 18th. On December 16th the Battalion moved again by march-route for Enghien, arriving there on the 18th, and there finished the year.

The Third Battalion started on November 17th on a march which, by way of Valenciennes, took it by stages to Chereng, where it remained until the end of the year.

The Eleventh Battalion moved on November 12th to Malplaquet † and remained there until the 23rd, when it began a march which brought it to Cambrai on the 27th. On the 30th it moved again by lorry to Harponville south of Acheux, and on December 3rd another four miles further west to Hérisart, whence there was no further move during the year.

In the Twelfth Battalion H.Q. and "C" and "D" Companies moved on November 11th-12th to La Grisoelle, south of Mairieux, leaving "A" and "B" in the outpost line, where they remained until the 15th, when the whole Battalion moved to Bettrechies, north-west of Bavai, until the 23rd, where it also started the march to Cambrai, which it reached on the 28th. Another move, by lorry, took it to Coigneux on December 1st and, on the 8th, it marched to its final destination at Bus-les-Artois, north of Acheux.

The Thirteenth Battalion remained at Caudry until December 1st, when it began a long march into Belgium, which ended eventually on December 20th at Jumet.

* To avoid repetition it may be stated that all Battalions were similarly occupied.

† Scene of the final great battle of the War of the Spanish Succession.

The average day's march was ten miles, and on one day thirteen, but not a man fell out. During the month two D.C.M.s were awarded and a Bar to the D.C.M. to No. B/203252 Serjeant N. Champion, D.C.M., M.M.

On November 18th the Sixteenth Battalion cadre returned to the 39th Division but spent the remainder of the year at Haudricourt, training its malarial reinforcements.

Thus no fighting Battalion of the Regiment had found a place in the Army of Occupation on the Rhine.

1919.

Demobilization. This is no place for a description of demobilization and its difficulties, but it will be readily understood that delay in returning to civil life must have been tedious, and to many men must have appeared unnecessary. In all Battalions of the Regiment discipline remained unimpaired ; in fact, during a temporary ebullition of dissatisfaction amongst other troops at a base port, a returning leave-party of Riflemen received high praise for its unwavering loyalty to authority.

The process had now begun and, day by day, Battalions grew weaker.

On January 5th, 1919, the First Battalion moved by 'bus to Haine St. Paul, in the La Louvière area, where it spent all January and February. A serious shortage of non-commissioned officers was by now felt owing to many regular soldiers going home on furlough before joining the post-bellum army, and by the end of February the Battalion was re-organized in two companies ; "B" and "C" forming a new "C" Company and "A" and "I" a new "I" Company. There is no war diary for March, but by April the Battalion was at Binche and preparing for the return home. Mobilization stores were handed over to the 1st Bn. South Wales Borderers and a draft sent to the 148th Prisoners-of-War Company.

On April 20th the cadre Battalion left for Dunkirk, and on the 23rd embarked for Dover in the S.S. "Antrim." From Dover it went to Aldershot and was quartered in Oudenarde Barracks, where it was to be re-formed as the First Battalion.

* The Second Battalion remained at Enghien until March 17th, except, that on January 24th, with the 24th Brigade group, it marched towards

**The Review
in Brussels.** Brussels, arriving there on the 25th. The next day it took part in a ceremonial parade and marched past the King of the Belgians ; the formation being "double fours," with eight pack-mules and eight G.S. limbered wagons following in rear. Unfortunately snow fell during the march-past and during the previous night.

Subsequently a Special Order of the Day was issued by the G.O.C. IIIrd Corps expressing His Majesty's pleasure at welcoming the troops who had taken part in the march "for the first time since Waterloo" and his personal appreciation of their soldierly bearing and turn-out. "As fine a body of troops as it would be possible to find under arms anywhere," was King Albert's expression to General Butler. After the parade the Battalion was given twenty-four hours' leave in Brussels, and on the 29th was back at Enghien. On the 31st there was another ceremony, the Battalion attending a parade, when General Degoutte presented the Croix de Guerre to the 24th Field Ambulance.

On February 12th Bandmaster S. J. Young, four bandsmen and seventeen band-boys, joined for duty, and the Band was now to be fully employed, by day and night.

On February 28th the Battalion left its quarters in the College St. Augustine and moved into the Ecole des Filles.

By March 16th the Battalion was so reduced in numbers that a fatigue party of sixteen other ranks left no men at all for church parade.

On the 17th the Battalion moved to Ath and by the 28th had become a cadre. During February, March and April, the band-boys were taken for several instructional tours to Waterloo and places in the line where the Battalion had fought more recently.

On May 15th the war diary closes abruptly with the Second Battalion still at Ath.

The Third Battalion lived an uneventful life at Chereng. It also had apparently received a draft of band-boys, for it is recorded that they were taken for trips similar to those of the Second Battalion, whilst, on March 15th, Bandmaster T. Stevens arrived with a draft of forty-three other ranks.

The war diary concludes with the end of April, the Third Battalion being still at Chereng.

The story of the Eleventh Battalion in 1919 is one continuous record of gradual dispersal. On February 27th it moved from Hérisart to Terra-mesnil, near Doullens, and thence on April 15th to Amplier, in the same neighbourhood, where it was finally reduced to cadre strength. On May 26th it entrained at Mondicourt for Havre and, embarking there on the 29th, landed at Southampton on the morning of the 30th.

There, and then, the Eleventh Battalion, strength three officers and twenty-six other ranks, finally disappeared.

The record of the Twelfth Battalion is very similar. It remained at

Bus-les-Artois until March 7th, when it moved to Authie near by. There on April 30th the Twelfth Battalion diary closes.

The story of the Thirteenth Battalion is soon told: it remained at Jumet for four months,* and, on May 5th, embarked for England, there to disappear from sight.

Finally there remains the Sixteenth Battalion.

On January 15th, 1919, the cadre Battalion moved from the Aumale area to Havre, where it became part of the Infantry Base Dépôt.

On June 20th the Sixteenth Battalion vanished, its few remaining officers and men being merged in the "Details Battalion" Rifle Brigade at the Havre base.

Thus ends the record of the Fighting Battalions of the Rifle Brigade during the World War.

The story of the Regular and Service Battalions of the Regiment has been told, but mention should be made of some other units which either contributed their share towards victory, or later, took over the duties of the Army of Occupation.

The Fifth and Sixth (Special Reserve) Battalions continued their good work of providing reinforcements, both officers and men, for the Battalions overseas and never once failed to produce a draft when ordered.

The Fourteenth and Fifteenth (Reserve) Battalions, raised in October 1914, in September 1916 became the 19th and 20th Battalions Training Reserve, whilst the Seventeenth (Reserve) Battalion, formed in October 1915, at the same time became the 112th Battalion in the same category. By March 1918 all but nine of one hundred and forty-nine of these battalions had been disbanded and a new organization evolved.

After the passing of the National Service Act in 1916 large numbers of boys became liable for service on attaining their eighteenth birthday, and to meet this influx a new scheme was put into force.

It was considered desirable to train these boys, classified as A.IV, in battalions of their own, and for this purpose regiments were given three more battalions, numbered, arbitrarily, 51st, 52nd, and 53rd. Each 53rd Battalion was known as a "Young Soldiers" battalion, and to it went the A.IV boys as they were called up; there they were issued with uniform and equipment and began elementary training. The 51st and 52nd Battal-

* "For the Duration."

ions were known as "Graduated" battalions and to them were dispatched the A.IV's from the 53rd Battalion.

The "Graduated" battalions were organized in five companies and received a draft of a complete company once a month from the 53rd Battalion, which dispatched such a draft every fortnight to each graduated battalion alternately. In the latter progressive training was carried out for five months, Numbers 2, 3, 4 and 5 Companies moving up each month, the latter being replaced by another company from the 53rd Battalion and Number 1 being dispatched, complete, to a Base Depôt overseas.

The scheme was sound and worked well, the A.IV young soldier being, as a rule, desperately keen to fit himself for service overseas and, under good officers and N.C.O.'s, most biddable and well-disciplined.

These battalions, however, were not merely training cadres but were organized in brigades and divisions for home defence and were each provided with war equipment and transport.

A Royal Review. In the early part of 1919 it was decided to send Graduated and Young Soldiers' battalions to the Army of Occupation on the Rhine to take the place of the fighting battalions which were now being reduced to cadre, or disappearing altogether.

On March 1st, 1919, H.M. King George V held a review in Hyde Park, where he inspected fourteen of the sixty-nine battalions destined to be sent to Germany. The Regiment was represented by the Fifty-Third Battalion, the 53rd Bn. 60th being in the same brigade, and the review was a great success from start to finish, there being but one small contretemps which went unnoticed by the great majority of the large crowd of spectators. By some strange mischance the Official Programme showed the 53rd Bn. 60th on the left of the line; this was rectified on the spot and the Fifty-Third Battalion took its rightful place, but, unhappily, the Senior Director of Music in charge of the massed bands had not been informed of the change, with the result that the two Rifle Battalions each went by to the other's March Past.

On this same day, March 1st, the Fifty-Second Battalion, under Lieutenant-Colonel E. P. A. Riddell, C.M.G. D.S.O., crossed to Dunkirk and left by rail the same afternoon. The next sixty hours were spent in the train, which, travelling via Charleroi, Liège and Cologne, with periodical halts for meals, finally at 4.0 a.m. on the 4th brought the Battalion to its destination, Worringen, some nine miles north of Cologne. The Battalion was billeted with H.Q. and one

The Watch on The Rhine.

in the train, which, travelling via Charleroi, Liège and

Cologne, with periodical halts for meals, finally at 4.0 a.m.

company at Langel, two companies at Fuhlingen and one at Rheinkassel, all within a few miles south-east of Worringen and on the left bank of the Rhine ; it was now in the 5th Brigade, 2nd Division. The Battalion remained here for the rest of the month, two of the outlying companies joining Battalion H.Q. at Worringen on the 17th. Normal training was continued including, education and a number of lectures by outside lecturers on various subjects.

During the month General Sir H. Plumer, Commanding Second Army, inspected the Battalion, which earned his congratulations.

The Fifty-Third Battalion, under Lieut.-Colonel Hon. N. Gathorne-Hardy, D.S.O., was the next to go, leaving on March 21st from Tilbury and arriving at Antwerp on the 23rd, where it went into a very comfortable Rest Camp. On the 26th the Battalion entrained and, travelling via Visé and Aix-la-Chapelle, arrived at Düren, eighteen miles south-west of Cologne, in the early hours of the 27th. There had been two halts for meals, when the local organization was excellent. From Düren the Battalion marched to billets, H.Q. and two companies being at Derichsweiler, just west of Düren, and the remainder at Schlich, near by.

The Battalion, which was now in the 6th (Light) Brigade, 2nd (Light) Division, spent the remainder of March settling down and beginning training.

The Fifty-First Battalion, under Lieut-Colonel E. B. Powell, D.S.O., also left England on March 21st and, proceeding by Dover and Dunkirk, arrived at Stommeln, twelve miles north-west of Cologne, early on the morning of the 24th, where it went into billets. Next day, one company moved to Fliesteden, two miles further south, and the Battalion remained in these two villages until the end of the month.

On April 7th and 8th all three Battalions moved ; on the former date the Fifty-Second Battalion went by rail to Königshoven, sixteen miles north of Düren, and on the following day the Fifty-First Battalion marched to Bedburg, four miles south-east of Königshoven and sixteen miles west of Cologne, and the Fifty-Third Battalion moved by rail also to Bedburg. From these places there was to be no further move for more than two months, the Battalions now forming the 3rd (Light) Brigade (Brigadier-General H. B. P. L. Kennedy, C.M.G., D.S.O., 60th Rifles) of the Light Division (Major-General Sir R. Whigham, K.C.B., D.S.O.).

The Fifty-First and Fifty-Second Battalions were in normal billets, whilst the Fifty-Third, with the transport of the Fifty-First, was in a large linoleum factory ; this was an unsatisfactory arrangement as the officers' billets were in the town and separated from the factory by a level-crossing over some five railway tracks. The factory was not too comfortable and

the various ingredients of German linoleum had each its unpleasant smell of greater or lesser density.

The Brigade settled down to work and play, training of all sorts occupying the mornings, whilst the afternoons were devoted to the ordinary recreation of the Rifleman in any peace station. Football, of course came first, both Rugby and Association being played, and boxing tournaments, rifle-meetings, athletic sports and, later on, cricket left few dull hours, the Fifty-Second Battalion even including a Battalion treasure-hunt as a change. In Cologne itself there was the opera, where two-thirds of the house were taken up by the Allied Armies and an allotment of seats made to formations and units ; there were race-meetings also, at first on a course improvised by the Cavalry Division and, later, on the Cologne race-course proper. For the officers there was excellent trout-fishing, both wet and dry-fly, in the River Roer, which wound its way through the hills for some fifteen to twenty miles south of Düren ; there was a small mountain railway running up the valley the sides of which were covered with fir-woods and cherry orchards and, at week-ends, the little train was crammed with British officers, armed with the unofficial rod and the official revolver, and crowds of German holiday-makers.

Not every week-end, however, was leave taken, for Sunday Church Parade was an event of considerable ceremony ; it was held either in the open air or in the local Lutheran Church and, in either case, was attended by many a Rhineland paterfamilias conducting a large family. The Fifty-Third Battalion was particularly fortunate in the possession of more than one first-class organist amongst the officers and non-commissioned officers.

Altogether life passed pleasantly enough and the A.IV Rifleman, fully justifying the confidence reposed in him, became a thoroughly dependable regular soldier ; so much did he consider himself to be such that he gradually eliminated the "Fifty" from the number of his Battalion and it was the football teams of the First, Second and Third Battalions which were urged on to victory by their supporters.

There were some changes in command during April and May, Colonel Powell leaving to command the 9th London Regiment and being succeeded by Lieut.-Colonel C. H. N. Seymour, D.S.O., 60th Rifles, whilst Lieut.-Colonel W. W. Seymour arrived to command the Fifty-Third Battalion, Major Gathorne-Hardy and Major G. W. Liddell, D.S.O., exchanging places as second-in-command of the latter Battalion and the Fifty-First.

On May 6th the brigade had the honour of being inspected by H.R.H. The Colonel-in-Chief. The Fifty-Second Battalion was brought in to Bedburg for the occasion and the brigade was formed up on a football ground in the

town ; subsequently the brigade marched past H.R.H. in column of route.

On May 15th two companies of the Fifty-Third Battalion moved under canvas in a small fir wood just outside the town—a great improvement on the linoleum factory, although swarms of mosquitoes made the nights somewhat trying.

On May 29th the two Battalions in Bedburg were inspected by General Sir William Robertson, C.-in-C. Rhine Army. After the parade the C.-in-C. asked the three commanding officers if they were satisfied with their men's accommodation and each pointed out possible improvements except as regards the camp. Two General Officers present, hastening to assure Sir William that the billets were perfect, received the characteristic answer : " Well, you've heard what your Commanding Officers say, and they're not exactly bragging about them, are they ? "

Strangely enough, it was no later than June 2nd that coincidence brought an additional fifty bell-tents to the Fifty-Third Battalion, which enabled H.Q. and the remaining two companies to go under canvas ; it was rather a tight squeeze in the little wood, but eventually room was found for all the tents and, on June 7th, the whole Battalion was assembled in a camp which, though it bore little resemblance to the diagram in the Field Service Pocket-Book, was comfortable, healthy—and odourless.

It was not long, however, before there was to be a general move eastwards by the Light Division, which, by June 15th, was commanded by Major-General G. D. Jeffreys, C.B., C.M.G.

The reason for the move was as follows :—

On May 7th the terms of the Peace Treaty had been delivered to the German delegates, who had been given fifteen days in which to return their answer. The German Government made certain counter-proposals and the final concessions made by the Allied and Associated Powers were handed to the German delegates on June 16th, with an intimation that five days would be allowed in which to accept, or to reject, the terms in their entirety.

In the event of rejection the Allied Armies were prepared to move into Germany with a view to occupying Essen, Frankfort and Mannheim.

Move to The Rhine. It was on Waterloo Day that the move began, the

Fifty-First Battalion marching nine miles to Glessen and Fliesteden, the Fifty-Second, thirteen to Strommeln, and the Fifty-Third, eleven to Poulheim ; next day rather shorter marches took the three battalions to Nippes, Mungersdorf and Bickendorf, respectively, suburbs on the north and west of Cologne. The Fifty-First Battalion

remained at Nippes, whilst, on the 20th, the Fifty-Third Battalion crossed the Rhine to Mulheim, and on the 21st, the Fifty-Second moved to Cologne Sulz.

By now orders had been received postponing all further moves. Herr Scheideman's Government had fallen and had been succeeded by that under Herr Bauer, who, it was believed, would sign the Treaty. The story of the Fifty-First and Fifty-Second Battalions is finished.

The Fifty-Third, the junior Battalion of the Regiment, had still a few more days of activity. It was now in, and under the tactical orders of, the IIInd Corps, commanded by General Sir Claude Jacob, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., and was disposed with two companies in Mulheim, one in Dellbruck and one in Leverkusen, three miles east and four miles north of Mulheim, respectively.

On June 21st the Battalion took over all guards from the 18th Bn. 60th.

The situation at this time was that all railways, tramways, roads and tracks entering the Cologne bridge-head from unoccupied Germany were picqueted by Allied troops. Each picquet was accommodated in a house, or cottage, with an official flag-staff stepped in the garden and flying a large Union Jack, and its duty was to see that everyone entering, or leaving, occupied Germany carried an official pass.

The Fifty-Third Battalion sector included the point where the road, tramway, and railway, from Mulheim to Dusseldorf, crossed the temporary frontier. Each train and tram was halted, the passengers removed for examination and conducted on foot across the frontier, the carriages searched, and the passengers re-embarked. The system of re-embarkation caused considerable annoyance to male Germans; each train arrived with the men in the best places but, during examination, men and women were separated and the latter comfortably re-settled in the carriages before the men were released to take what accommodation was left.

Leverkusen, where one company was on detachment, was an enormous chemical factory covering acres of ground and, during the War, had been the chief source of Germany's poison-gas; it was now IIInd Corps H.Q. and Sir Claude Jacob, in the general manager's house, extended much kindly hospitality to his escort. Another interesting guard was that over a petrol-station on the banks of the Rhine, where bulk petrol was unloaded from tank barges and canned, chiefly by women labourers. It was possibly the most inflammable spot in Europe and was treated with the respect accorded to a magazine, an outer and inner line of sentries searching all-comers for matches, pipes, tobacco, etc.

The new life, however, was not to continue for long.

On June 23rd the German Government notified the Allies that it was prepared to accept their terms and, on June 28th, the Treaty was signed.

On that summer's evening a long line of British 18-pdrs. came into action on the embankment below the Hohenzollern Bridge and the thunder of their 101 guns' salute, echoing from bank to bank across the Rhine, proclaimed, alike to victor and to vanquished, that Peace, for what it was worth, had come at last.

END OF VOLUME II.

THE
BATTLE-HONOURS

THE GREAT WAR

" LE CATEAU,"	" Flers-Courcelette,"	" CAMBRAI, 1917, '18,"
" Retreat from Mons,"	" Morval,"	" St. Quentin,"
" Marne, 1914,"	" Le Transloy,"	" Rosières,"
" Aisne, 1914, '18,"	" Ancre Heights,"	" Avre,"
" Armentières, 1914,"	" Ancre, 1916, '18,"	" Villers-Bretonneux,"
" NEUVE CHAPELLE,"	" ARRAS, 1917, '18,"	" Lys,"
" YPRES, 1915, '17,"	" Vimy, 1917,"	" Hazebrouck,"
" Gravenstafel,"	" Scarpe, 1917, '18,"	" Bethune,"
" St. Julien,"	" Arleux,"	" Drocourt-Quéant,"
" Frezenberg,"	" MESSINES, 1917,"	" HINDENBURG LINE,"
" Bellewaarde,"	" Pilckem,"	" Havrincourt,"
" Aubers,"	" Langemarck, 1917,"	" Canal du Nord,"
" Hooge, 1915,"	" Menin Road,"	" Selle,"
" SOMME, 1916, '18,"	" Polygon Wood,"	" Valenciennes,"
" Albert, 1916, '18,"	" Broodseinde,"	" Sambre,"
" Bazentin,"	" Poelcappelle,"	" FRANCE AND FLANDERS, 1914-1918,"
" Delville Wood,"	" Passchendaele,"	" MACEDONIA, 1915- 1918 "
" Guillemont,"		

The following Ten Battle-Honours are those selected and authorized for bearing on the Appointments.

"LE CATEAU,"
"NEUVE CHAPELLE,"
"Ypres, 1915, '17,"
"SOMME, 1916, '18,"
"ARRAS, 1917, '18,"

"MESSINES, 1917,"
"CAMBRAI, 1917, '18,"
"HINDENBURG LINE,"
"FRANCE AND FLANDERS, 1914-18,"
"MACEDONIA, 1915-18."



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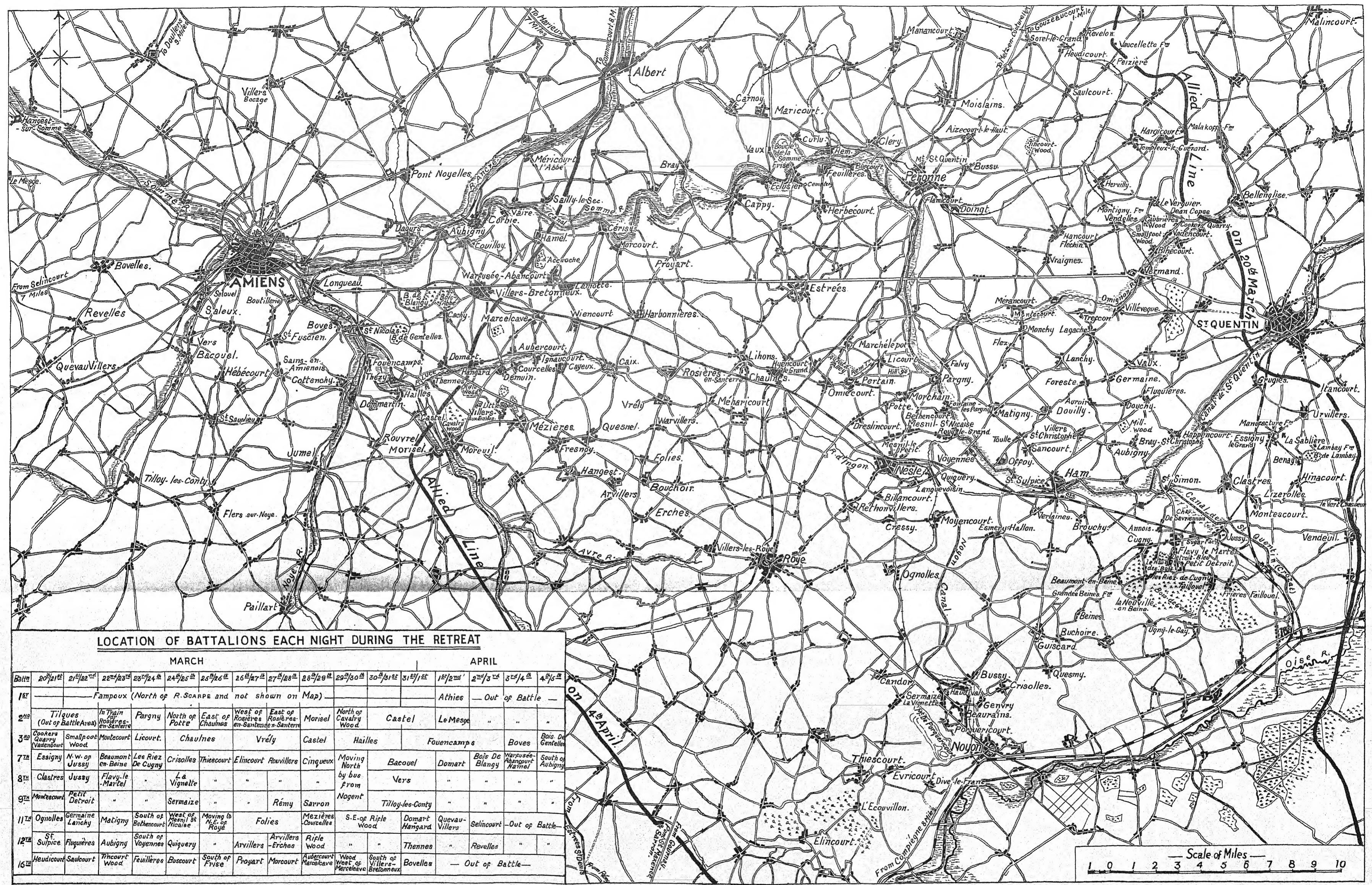
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THE SOMME RETREAT.

1918.



21st March-4th April, 1918.

